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Vol. XVI

No. 6

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 16

MARCH, 1913

NUMBER 6

The Affair at Penfield

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "Marcia," "Father at All Angels," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

CHAPTER I.

MRS. EUSTACE FIELDING, seated in the sunny, quiet spaciousness of her study at Penfield, and seeming to look absently across the sloping lawns and meadows toward the fringe of woods at the bottom of the hills, was, in reality, facing the first decisive failure of her triumphant career. Her capacity for scenting defeat had not been dulled by almost fifty years of unfamiliarity with it. Almost fifty years accurately describes the term of her success, for, though the lady was now fifty-four, she had doubtless not begun her conquest of adverse destiny until she had put away rattles and rubber rings. She was a clever woman, as was admitted by even that part of the world which did not particularly love her, and so she still possessed the gift of perceiving the possibility of calamity before she was actually caught in its whirlwinds.

It was, she told herself, nothing less than calamity that confronted her now as she waited for her son Hopkinson to bring into her charming, if somewhat formidable, presence his fiancée, Clarice Tenney, known to the Eastern vaudeville circuit as Clarice Clavering. Hopkinson's name, by the way, had been an early proof of his mother's cleverness, an early promise of her success. She had been a Hopkinson, and

by saying, and in a matter-of-course and yet gently proud fashion, that her first-born must bear her father's name as well as his own, she had signified various important things to the not altogether friendly clan of the Fieldings—such as, for example, a mild determination to endure neither snubbing nor patronage. It had really been a very clever signal, as all agreed who heard of it back in the Shenandoah, which had been the habitat of Colonel Hopkinson while he dwelt upon this planet. Instead of trying to smother the unsmotherable, of trying to ignore that which could not be ignored, she had simply used them to her own ends, dignified them by her use of them. Instead of attempting to forget, to sink, her own racial identity in that of the better race into which she married, she had demanded its perpetuation in her eldest son's name, thereby indicating subtly to the world that she had had cause for pride in her forbears. But she never deceived herself. At fifty-four she was as keenly aware that her father had been an idle, dissolute, boastful vulgarian as she had been when she had suffered daily mortification from the fact, and had finally fled his presence to seek her own environment in New York.

It had been in a public stenographer's office that she had first met Eustace, then a fledgling author, and their intro-



As she looked across the lawns, she saw him now—her husband.

duction had been her employer's curt: "Here, Miss Hopkinson, you had better take Mr. Fielding's dictation. Miss Hopkinson will take it, Mr. Fielding." It was a source of gratification to Mrs. Fielding at fifty-four that in spite of the brevity of that introduction, she had been as dignifiedly difficult to woo as the most be-chaperoned damsel in all of the Knickerbocker New York with which her husband was affiliated. He could never look upon her, in their sober, unillumined middle age, and think that she had been easily won. And yet, almost from the day when Miss O'Keefe had turned him and his youthful manuscript over to her, she had intended to be his wife—intended it with some natural inclination of her pulses, intended it with a cool, instinctive perception of her needs and the opportunities for supplying them which he afforded.

Enough, perhaps, has been said to show that the welcoming of a vaudeville performer as a prospective daughter-in-law held more hardship for Mrs. Eustace Fielding than for mothers

whose place in the world had not depended so largely upon their own efforts.

She could not forbid the marriage, of course. Hopkinson was twenty-nine. Moreover, Mrs. Fielding was an admirable pattern of wifehood in that she professed to submit herself in all things to her husband, and Eustace, easy-going, charming, dilettant, inefficient, would not—most emphatically would not—forbid anything to anybody.

As she looked across the lawns, she saw him now—her husband. A long, lean, rather distinguished figure he made in his white flannels; but Mrs. Fielding did not view his appearance in the landscape with the pleasure it might have given another. Eustace ought to be writing. Under her firm management, he turned out his novel a year, and by keeping at it for twenty-five years he had acquired a certain public—the small, but highly respectable, public that likes to be very gently stirred in its emotions, to be made to smile very faintly, to be made to weep not at all—a somewhat anaemic public, in short.

But as the anæmic public thought its bloodlessness a test of its fineness, his vogue was a social asset. Only he and the charming lady, his efficient wife, knew how thin would have been the quality of the water served with their bread had they depended for a living upon his earnings as a writer; and no one smiled when Mrs. Fielding allowed it to be known that there was a significance in the name they gave their place in Westchester when they acquired it, twelve years before. "Penfield! How awfully clever!" cried their friends, at Mrs. Fielding's instigation. "Pen-field! Of course! Pen—and Fields—and Fieldings! And how awfully you must all love it, since it is Mr. Fielding's perfectly charming books that have given it to you!"

As a matter of fact, it was Mrs. Fielding's perfectly careful investment of the profits of her share of Miss O'Keefe's office that had given them Penfield. But her interest in Miss O'Keefe's office had been purchased with the small profits from Mr. Fielding's "perfectly charming" books, so that perhaps, after all, Penfield was not masquerading under false pretenses. Of course, Eustace had inherited a modest fortune, or Penfield would have been out of the question even with Miss O'Keefe's office growing more and more voluminous in its proportions as time went on, and more and more young authors brought their fledglings into it.

But, inheritance or no inheritance, Eustace should not be idling at ten o'clock in the forenoon. No matter how alluring the scent of the late June roses in the arbors near the house, no matter how inviting, how irresistible, the scent of the hay in the lower meadows, no matter how blue and green and golden the whole world, he should not be there. If he should fail to publish his book a year, what became of her standing as a successful novelist's wife? What became of his distinction as the man of family and fortune who preferred to devote his talent to letters rather than to piling more dollars upon the pile his ancestors had accumulated?

Although Mrs. Eustace Fielding had come to believe, in the unfathomed depths of her mind, that Eustace's novel writing was but another name for Eustace's indolence and Eustace's general lack of ambition, she had no intention of allowing that fact to appear to the world or to her husband. Her admiration abroad for his work was perfect; her arrangements at home for its uninterrupted prosecution were perfect; her children were as correctly trained in the creed that "father must not be disturbed" as if she and he and they believed that father's labors were the pivot upon which the universe swung. And there he was idling—

Linda and Bob had evidently espied him also, and they came running toward him—the lovely aftermath of Mrs. Fielding's successful marriage. Linda and Bob, twins of ten years of age, had been one of her greatest triumphs. They had been such a delightful surprise, arriving as they did when Hopkinson was in college, and Stasia, his junior by three years, was "finishing" at Miss Harvey's, along with half the richest girls of her age in the city. They—the twins—had made Anna Fielding a young mother again, almost a bride again, to her husband's tender fancy. And she was not so lacking in femininity as to object to that; on the contrary, she had always endeavored conscientiously, even a little laboriously, to keep Eustace her lover; but it had been most generous of nature to supplement her efforts.

The children hurled themselves upon their father. Mrs. Fielding could not repress a smile of affection and pride. They were lovely creatures—the three of them—out there on the green lawn, with the green and blossoming background behind them. Still, Eustace was so incorrigibly lazy. Ah, there came Miss Ghent. She would take her charges away from their father, and then she—Anna Fielding—would go out and gently cajole him back into his big workroom across the top of the house. Had Mr. Fielding been a scene painter instead of the writer of pale, careful vignettes, he could not have

had a more ample shop in which to labor than that big, transformed attic.

She watched the group admiringly, yet anxiously. Suppose that those dear children, dear to her as autumn rose-buds to a devoted gardener, were forced to face the world handicapped by an impossible vaudevillian of a sister-in-law! They were handicapped enough already. They had arrived in the world too late and too unexpectedly to be sharers in the largesse of their Grandfather Fielding's will. Hopkinson and Eustasia had both been beneficiaries under that document to an extent which, if not important, had been at least pleasant. And in part of the paternal estate Eustace Fielding had acquired only a life interest, the capital to descend to "my dear grandchildren, Hopkinson and Eustasia Fielding," upon their father's death. No, assuredly the late-come Bob and Linda had enough handicaps in the race toward success without the additional one of a vulgar sister-in-law.

Amy Ghent called the children off to their lessons. Mrs. Fielding smiled approval upon that; she frowned annoyance when she saw the eager pantomime of entreaty that followed—the children entreating their father to beg them a holiday from the schoolroom, their father half entreating Amy Ghent in their behalf. It was time that she—Anna—should take part in the proceedings. She emerged from the shelter of her room to the vine-wreathed balcony upon which it opened, and stood there, a charming vision of relentless fate in her pink lawn negligee. She had had her chocolate in her own room, reserving her forces for the fray that was to come later. She called, and the group on the lawn looked up. The sunlight struck her dazzling pile of silver hair, but her complexion did not fear the morning light; there were roses on her cheeks still.

"Oh, mother!" caroled the children pleadingly. She shook her shining head firmly, though she smiled.

"Naughty monkeys!" she called. "When you know that father must never be interrupted in the forenoon!"

"Oh, but, Anna—" began the culprit novelist.

"Eustace, dear, how can you make it so hard for Miss Amy? How will she ever succeed in training our young savages?"

In the back of Amy Ghent's dark, quiet eyes a little gleam of mischief sparkled for a moment, but she did not allow her lips to curve into an understanding smile.

"This afternoon, Linda! This afternoon, Bob!" the governess said; and, scuffing the sward and sullenly declaring that "this afternoon" was not like "this morning," and that they didn't want this afternoon, anyway, Linda and Bob departed in her wake toward the summer schoolhouse, a little shack of rough logs on the edge of the brook that meandered through the Penfield farm lands.

The sight of her departing infants, the thought of her older son, probably even then boarding a train in the city with his impossible inamorata, recalled to Mrs. Fielding's mind the fact that she had not seen her daughter Eustasia that morning.

"Eustace, have you seen Stasia?" she asked, leaning over the stone balustrade of the balcony. Her husband tossed her a rose.

"No, Juliet," he replied. "Why? Do you want her? I think Maggie said that she and Beverly had had an early breakfast and had gone off for a day's fishing. Ah, would I were the glove upon that hand—"

"Silly!" she cried, but with a little, flying light of pleasure on her handsome face. "Come up for a moment, will you, please, dear? On your way up to your shop." Thus delicately she reminded him of his truancy from his duty.

"I'll come up to you," he retorted; "but I'm not going near the shop today, Anna. I haven't got an idea in my head, and God never meant that we should waste June in writing bad novels."

Mrs. Fielding's success had not been obtained by nagging her world into doing her commands, and now she only

said: "It is a heavenly day, isn't it?" in a sympathetic tone.

He disappeared from the lawn, and she heard his elastic tread on the stairs. He entered her study—it was a combination of office, dressing room, and library, but Mrs. Fielding in conversation signified that it was a place rather for her intellectual than for her frivolous or businesslike pursuits. She looked at him affectionately. She was fastidiously glad that he had not developed corpulence with middle age, that the lines of his tanned face were of whimsy and humor rather than of care and anxiety, that the strands of gray in his drabbish-brown hair and his pointed beard were comparatively few.

"White is very becoming to you, Eustace," she said irrelevantly as he threw himself into a long chair beside her desk and lit a cigarette.

"Oh, I have the fatal gift in almost any color," he assured her lightly. He threw away his match, and looked at her quizzically. "But it wasn't merely to comment upon my sartorial effects that you wanted to see me. Something's preying on your mind—I know you. You're worrying over this Clarice of Hoppy's. Why not wait and see if she is so bad? The boy hasn't shown such shocking taste in other things."

"Well, I am worried about that, of course. Taste seems to take a vacation so often during the falling-in-love period. But I called you in to speak about Beverly and Stasia. Do you think—"

"Not a thing in it, Anna the Anxious. Not a thing! Consider—they've been like brother and sister almost, for years."

"Almost!" she echoed significantly. "And even that was long ago. Think—she's twenty-six; he's twenty-eight; why, he has been out of the law school four years. It was while he was there that they were thrown so much together. I—I almost wish we hadn't asked him out here to stay this time."

"My dear, you have matches on the brain, thanks to this affair of Hoppy's. Take my word for it, Stasia regards

Beverly as she does Hop and Bob—I mean, with the same sort of regard; not, of course, with the same degree of affection. I'm the novelist, dear; I'm the specialist in female hearts. And I bid you reassure yourself. Leave me my little province. All the rest of the universe is yours." His bright, dark eyes laughed merrily into her blue, anxious ones.

"It's a dreadful thing to have one's children grow up," she declared. "Stasia—I don't understand her, Eustace. Why isn't she married? Why isn't she—different? She's not a bit like you and me."

"No, she's not. She's like an aunt of mine—Aunt Hester. You never saw her. She—she died when I was a little shaver. But I remember her vividly. She was a person even a child could not forget. Stasia looks like her—dark, colorful. She was an independent creature, too. Stasia reminded me of her in the matter of investing her grandfather's legacy. Aunt Hester hated to be managed, and, although she was of an open disposition, would be secretive to avoid management and interference. Just like Stasia and the legacy. Poor Aunt Hester!"

"What happened to her? I don't remember ever hearing of her," said his wife.

"She was mother's sister; there were only the two of them. So there was no one left after mother's death to keep Aunt Hester's memory alive. She—she—it is a tragic story, and I don't know why I got started on it, on a day when you are worried, anyway."

"Tell me it," commanded his wife.

"She died in childbirth. She had married unfortunately—and her husband had deserted her before six months were over—a blackguardly adventurer. It broke her heart, and neither she nor the infant survived. I ought not to have told you the story, dearest, to-day, when you are all unstrung anyway."

For his practical, pretty, efficient wife was staring at him out of desolate eyes.

"And you say that Stasia is like her!" she cried.

"I say that she has the same colored hair! So had my mother, who lived the happiest, most peaceful life in the world. Come, come, Anna, be sensible! Leave premonitions and all that to the partner to whom they belong—the fanciful fellow, the novelist. Don't you take to second-sight and that sort of thing."

Anna looked at him dully for a second. Then she shook off the unfamiliar mood of incompetence and inaction.

"I'm going to get rid of Beverly Moore!" she cried crisply. "I don't care if he is my second cousin once removed. He's lazy, and—I don't trust him. Ah, there comes the car! I didn't realize it was so late." She glanced at the silver-rimmed clock on her desk. "Eleven-forty! I suppose Hopkinson will bring her straight to me!"

"I'm off!" cried her husband. "I'll meet her at luncheon. It will be easier for her—it won't be intimate. That fellow from the *Bookworm* who is going to interview me will be here for luncheon—"

"Oh, Eustace!" cried his wife, in a voice of poignant reproach.

"Why not?" There were times when Eustace, in spite of the thirty years of their existence side by side, could not understand his wife's reluctances, her shrinkings from scrutiny. It was nothing to him that an interviewer was to be present on the day when his son introduced a possibly undesirable young woman to the household in the guise of a prospective daughter-in-law. Since he had determined to bear with Hoppy's doing the thing, the opinion of Mr. Redpath, of the *Bookworm*, concerning it did not trouble him. But with Anna it was otherwise. Now she merely sighed and looked at him helplessly.

"Oh, well, I suppose it doesn't matter much," she conceded. "No engagement is to be announced yet—anyway. So it doesn't make much difference. You'd better run for it if you don't want to be caught."

He ran for it, and Hopkinson entered, leading a girl.

CHAPTER II.

Penfield lies only an hour from New York, but to Clarice Tenney the sixty minutes had been endless. Nothing that Hopkinson had said to her had reassured her.

"You know that I ought not to be going out there with you in this way," she had cried, on an average of once every ten minutes. "Imagine! If she had approved, if they had approved—your family, I mean—they would have come to me. I ought not to have compromised with my dignity—but, Hop, I couldn't have had your mother see me for the first time in Mrs. Le Ferdinand's parlor, could I? With all the girls going by the door to look in, and dear, old, collarless Jim Wetherbee shuffling in in his carpet slippers and pretending to look for a newspaper, and John Gaylord walking in with his gloves in his hand, humming a tune and acting the part of a surprised man of fashion, as he does in 'The Night Owl.' Could I? Oh, could I?"

"Stop worrying, Clarice," commanded Hopkinson. "I do think that Penfield will be a better environment for you and the mater to meet in than old Mother Ferdy's. You'll like Penfield and—"

"But I ought to have waited until she came to see me and folded me to her heart and all that. I ought not to be engaged to you if I am ashamed to have your people know the way I live. I ought not—"

Hopkinson gave her nervous, badly gloved fingers a squeeze as they lay in her lap. But he did not succeed in distracting her attention from the ordeal to be faced.

"Suppose she asks me about myself—about my father and mother? Mind, I shall not tell! No one in the world shall ever know besides you!" The dark-gray eyes that she raised to his were tragic. Her lips were pale and set. Her white young face was a resolute mask. More apparent than the soft

curves of her youth, or the modeling of the features that gave her her quaint attractiveness, were the firmness of her chin, the hard lines of experience about her mouth.

"Darling, you are coming out to lunch with a very nice, elderly lady whose years prevent her from coming into town to see you in midsummer." Hopkinson winced a little as he said that, and he tried to forget how many committed meetings his mother was capable of attending even in dog days. "You are not going to appear in a court of law as a defendant."

"Ah!" She shivered and sighed. And then she was silent until they alighted at the little Gothic station, with the beds of scarlet geranium blazing between it and the tracks, and the station agent's cannae showing behind the window of his cage. She was still silent as they whirled out in the Fielding motor toward Penfield. Hopkinson had tried to make conversation, from a traditional belief that an anxious mind must be "distracted." But to his observations on the weather, on the houses that they passed, on the gardens that they glimpsed behind hedges, on the characters whom they met, Clarice returned either no answer at all or the wrong one.

And gradually her mood communicated itself to him, and he became conscious of things before unnoticed. He realized that she made an inappropriate figure at the foot of the shallow flight of steps that led to the red brick, early Georgian house that Mrs. Fielding had caused to be erected on the terrace. He saw for the first time that she had no beauty in the conventional sense of the word; he saw that the dash of her hat was a meretricious dash, and he puzzled himself for half a second with the mystery of women's clothes which makes one extravagance perfectly reasonable and very elegant, and another merely cheap. He saw that the chamois gloves, which he knew had been purchased for this occasion, had burst in the thumb, just where an Argus-eyed, inimical, prospective mother-in-law could not fail to see the rent in the

very act of shaking hands. He was conscious that the blacking carefully applied to the toe of her left Oxford, where a tiny hole threatened, had been inadequate to its task of concealment; that her shoddy little ready-made dress of foulard did not belong in this house of expensively, exquisitely quiet values—of lovely rugs upon the hard-wood floor of the wide hall, of etchings and engravings upon the pale background of the stairway wall, of carved woods and Italian pottery jars. And with the deepening perception of what the ordeal must mean to her, with all its cruel contrasts, the look of protective love deepened in his eyes.

As for her, she moved with a marionettelike precision, as a man half dazed by drink might move. There was a blur before her eyes, a pounding of blood in her ears. It was like the unforgettable first night when she had faced a real audience with her little singing, dancing, whistling milkmaid act. It was like—she shuddered—and, shuddering, found herself confronted by a vision in pink and silver; she heard Hopkinson's voice saying proudly, and a little defiantly: "Mother, this is Clarice; Clarice, this is my mother." She pulled her chin up abruptly, aggressively. She had lived through the rest; she could live through this.

The voice that greeted her was determinedly babbling; it was, however, musical, as she gradually became aware. It courteously chattered melodious commonplaces until she had regained enough ease to reply in kind. Her quick-glancing eyes, as swift and wary as an animal's in strange surroundings, took note of a room wide, spacious, airy, lovely in itself and lovelier in its outlook upon the smooth pastoral beauty of the countryside. And by and by she became completely conscious of Anna Fielding, of her coronal of shining hair, of her delicately pink cheeks, of the brightness and keenness of her blue eyes, of the exquisiteness of her costume. By some curious trick of memory and fancy, she saw side by side with that carved, elderly face a little statuette of painted plaster that she

had looked at in the museum the Sunday before; both faces were so charmingly colored, so charmingly modeled; but Clarice knew that the inanimate one was the softer, was tenderer, less a mask than this one of flesh and blood.

"It was so good of you, Miss Tenney," the pleasant voice was saying, "to come out to luncheon informally in this way, when I hadn't been able to come in to call upon you. But it is one of the compensations of growing old that the young generation allows one to dispense with some formalities."

Clarice repressed a desire to shoot a hard, triumphant look at Hopkinson. Had she not told him that she ought not to come until his mother had called upon her? And here was his mother twitting her—oh, in quite the most cooing way in the world—upon her disregard of the ceremonies! But she didn't allow her eyes to telephone Hop. She only said that it had been very kind of Mrs. Fielding to ask her to luncheon.

"I always want to know my children's friends," answered Mrs. Fielding carefully, "when they will allow me to do so."

But Hopkinson struck into the feminine duologue with determination. He didn't like the indirectness of his mother's tone.

"Friends!" he cried. "That's good, mother! I am not likely to ask you to know many friends of Clarice's standing, do you think?"

Mrs. Fielding looked annoyed, but she turned to Clarice as if to an ally.

"Men are terribly headstrong creatures, are they not?" she said. "They want the moon, and they want it on the instant. Hopkinson doubtless desires us to fall into each other's arms at this moment, and to exchange vows of affection. He doesn't realize that we belong to the civilized sex, and that friendships are a matter of time with us."

Clarice sat still and looked miserable. She did not want to stay and lunch with this brilliantly hostile lady, who was so determined not to acknowledge her as her son's fiancée. But she

did unfortunately belong to the civilized sex; having accepted an invitation to luncheon, she could not very well leave before the meal was served. And she was forbidden by the rules of civilization from giving rein to her anger and disappointment. So she sat and looked baited and hard.

"Run away, Hoppy!" commanded his mother lightly. "Miss Tenney and I have a lot to say to each other that your presence prevents. We'll never become acquainted, with you hovering over the affair. Run off! Find Stasia if you can. She and Beverly are fishing, I believe. Bring them in to luncheon. Meantime, Miss Tenney and I are going to learn something of each other."

Hopkinson glanced at his fiancée with the foolish expression of a man proudly and happily in love.

"Well, the more you know each other, the more you'll love each other," he predicted confidently, and departed. And then Mrs. Fielding produced her scalpel, and began her vivisection of the young woman whom she did not desire for a daughter-in-law.

"Your parents are dead, I understand from Hopkinson, Miss Tenney," she began, with the proper amount of sympathy with orphans in her voice.

"My mother is dead," replied Miss Tenney, somewhat doggedly.

The shadow of a frown flitted across Mrs. Fielding's brow.

"Ah! I did not understand that it was only your mother. But perhaps I misunderstood. You see, one does not always realize the significance of the communications one's son makes in regard to the various young ladies of his acquaintance, or doubtless one would attend to them more carefully. I've been so often deceived in regard to the importance of what Hop was telling me about this girl or that— But that isn't tactful of me, is it? And, of course, there is truth in a lover's asseverations that *the girl* is the first and only— Do you live in your father's house, Miss Tenney, may I ask? I don't want to be inquisitive. But since Hop wouldn't let us treat each other

as mere friendly acquaintances you will forgive me if I seem a little probing?"

"Oh, certainly." Clarice's hands were twisting in her lap. She was enlarging the hole in the thumb every second.

"Do you mean that you do live with your father?"

"Oh, no! I didn't mean that. I don't live with my father."

"You are—you must pardon me—you are very young to be living alone, since it is not a necessity." There was a world of gentle reproof in Mrs. Fielding's manner. "You are younger than my girl, I think—than my older daughter—and I should hate to think of her living apart from her family."

"I am twenty-three," stated Clarice. "It—it is not from choice that I live apart from my father, Mrs. Fielding."

"You mean that you have to work? My dear girl, you must not misunderstand me. No one has a more sincere respect for the girl who must work for her living than I have. I myself worked for my living for a little while. I admit"—she was humorously reminiscent—"that it was a piece of bravado on my part rather than an actual necessity. We Southern girls—but no matter about ancient history like mine. I only wanted to assure you that I have not a particle of that snobbishness which would regard your working for a living as a demerit in you. It is the sort of work one does, and the way in which one does it, that counts. My son says that you are—er—"

"I've been four years in vaudeville," interrupted Clarice curtly. "I don't suppose it's the sort of work that ranks high in your opinion."

"You mustn't put opinions into my mouth, my dear," said Mrs. Fielding suavely. "But I should suppose it an occupation full of—er—hardship to a delicately nurtured girl. I am sure you are that," she added benevolently.

"It was the only thing I knew how



The children hurled themselves upon their father.

to do—my singing and dancing and whistling—when it became necessary for me to make my own living. I have not a good education. I could not teach. I had no capital to go into any sort of business. I couldn't bear the thought of being confined all day long in an office, even if I could have learned enough to get a position. And so I did the only thing I could do."

"And your father consented?"

Miss Tenney nodded.

"When I see him—if I see him," Mrs. Fielding corrected herself archly, "I shall take him to task for his carelessness in regard to his daughter."

The inquisition proceeded. Clarice finally decided that she had endured all that it is possible for human flesh to endure of the pin pricking, the pinching, the probing that her adversary so skillfully applied to her.

"Mrs. Fielding," she cried abruptly, "I ought not to have allowed Hopkinson to persuade me to come here in this anomalous way. You don't approve of our engagement. You want to forbid it, but you don't quite like

to do that. I should have had more dignity, more self-esteem. I should have waited for you to come to me, for you to accept me as your son's promised wife. It was silly to come out here as if I were a bale of goods to be inspected, and to be returned if not satisfactory. I am sorry if you don't like me—”

“Oh, my dear Miss Tenney!” protested Anna Fielding.

“Or my occupation. But—well, I should hate to cause a breach between Hopkinson and his family, but—”

“But you will do it if necessary? It will not be necessary. If you and Hop continue in the same mind toward each other until he is in a position to take over the cares and responsibilities of married life, there will be no breach whatever—except such a one as different tastes, different interests, inevitably make. But Hop is not too well established. He's been rather desultory about his law. And long engagements—you are too young to realize their folly. Of course, I cannot prevent your holding Hopkinson, and his holding you, to any sort of agreement you may wish. But for my own part, and I think I speak for Mr. Fielding also, I prefer to see you at present merely as one of my son's friends. You would both be wiser if you could be persuaded to see each other so. But that I cannot control. All that I can do is to say that for the present—for the present—I shall recognize no engagement, shall announce none. And I hope that you and your father will be equally reticent.”

It was finished. She had not meant to be quite so openly, quite so unreservedly, hostile. But she could not help it. And, given time, she could yet manage the situation. Of that she was sure. When had she failed to manage a situation?

“I'm afraid you don't realize,” said Clarice Tenney, with a little, one-sided smile that took the harshness from her small face and made it elishly attractive, “how little I could live on as Hop's wife, and how nearly able he is to take me—on my standards.”

“Love in a cottage, eh?” Mrs. Fielding laughed pleasantly. “Well, if it's a comfortable cottage, with gardens and kennels and stables, Hop will like it. He's used to poverty of a kind. We're poor enough in all conscience. Mr. Fielding will not prostitute his genius to the production of best sellers. But now let us cease to be serious, and go and see whom we can find for luncheon. Mercy! How dark it has grown! I hadn't noticed that a storm was preparing.”

“It does look like a storm. Do you have bad ones out here in the hills?” asked the girl, striving to imitate her hostess' suddenly casual manner.

“Terrific! I hope you're not afraid of them? I think we're in for it. Will you excuse me while I change for luncheon?”

She emerged from her bedroom in a few minutes, trig and youthful looking in her embroidered white linen. The sky was overcast with flying dun-colored and black clouds, and the air was full of the rumblings of thunder. As they went down the broad stairway the door at the front was flung open, and a tall young woman, followed by a short young man, dashed breathlessly in. The man had a fishing basket slung over his shoulder.

“Hello, Cousin Anna!” he called cheerfully. “We just made it! It's going to be a dandy of a storm! Shall I carry our catch to the kitchen?”

He was an attractive fellow, though one might be at a loss to define his attraction. He was not handsome, but he was agreeable looking. Of no particular force of bearing, he nevertheless carried himself well. He was confident, easy, kindly—more easy, perhaps, than kindly—in his look and manner. The tall, dark girl who had preceded him through the door had looked almost stern, almost forbidding, until he began to speak. Then her face brightened.

“Yes; I guess Nora will cook them for you,” said Mrs. Fielding. “Stasia, you got an early start, dear.”

Eustasia, who knew all the inflections in her mother's crisp voice, re-

plied to the tone by a look of slightly sullen defiance, and to the words by a grudging: "Not so very early. It was after six." Then she looked inquiringly toward Clarice, and Mrs. Fielding made the necessary introductions.

"This is my big girl, Eustasia," she said, smiling. "Stasia, this is Hopkinson's friend, Miss Tenney, of whom you have heard him speak. She was good enough to come out to luncheon informally with us to-day. Miss Tenney, my cousin, Mr. Moore. Ah, here comes the rest of the family!"

The rest of the family, under the convoy of Miss Ghent, burst noisily into the broad hall, followed by the first huge drops of a summer hurricane. The twins triumphantly announced which one had beaten in a race from the schoolhouse—it seemed that both had beaten! Their mother passed an investigating hand over their shoulders to discover whether any of the big drops had damped them.

"They'd better change, don't you think, Miss Amy?" she asked anxiously. "Oh—Miss Tenney, Miss Ghent. I'm afraid Bob will take another of his awful colds. Mercy, what a gale!"

The side lights of the broad hall door were darkened completely by the driving of the storm. At the other end of the corridor a big window, with a long seat built in beneath it, gave a view of purple-black and tawny clouds flying beyond a world of twisting, writhing, straining green branches. A broken limb, detached from a tree, struck portentously against the window. The wind blew the rain in almost horizontal lines across the landscape. The tumult of wild clouds was shot from moment to moment by flashes of forked lightning; mingled with the ominous creak of the great trees, the shriek of wind, the swift, bulletlike patter of raindrops was the dull, constant boomerang of thunder. From the corridor above came the whimpering of the frightened children. Suddenly all the uproar was penetrated by one more noise—the summons of the bell. A servant came flying to the door; opening it a little way, and striv-

ing to hold it so that the full force of the tempest would not sweep into the house, he saw an automobile party pressing close outside. Mrs. Fielding saw them also.

"Have your man drive into the garage!" she called above the noise of the storm. "Come in! Come in!"

It was a party of four, who accepted the invitation without loss of time. Once the door had been forced shut again, there was recognition among the unexpected guests and their hostess.

"Oh, Mrs. Henderson! And Mr. Henderson!" cried the latter vivaciously. Clarice Tenney's lip curled as if she recognized the tone of the climber.

"How d'ye do?" gasped Mrs. Henderson, unrolling yards of drenched blue veiling from her head and neck. "Excuse this descent. Mrs. Fielding, Mrs. Larrabee, and Mr. Larrabee. Will you take pity on us until this hurricane abates? Jim and I are showing the Larrabees something of our charming country—they're from England, where, though the sun shines little enough, you seldom get a thing like this."

Mrs. Fielding was all that was hospitable. She drove the ladies upstairs before her; she gave the men over to the care of her husband's man. "Eustace himself is being interviewed, poor dear! And I don't dare interrupt the operation, much as he would bless me for doing it," she said lightly. And in a few moments maids were running hither and thither with dry clothing for the drenched visitors.

The fury of the storm had passed by the time the augmented party had reassembled for luncheon, and the day had settled down for the time to a steady downpour. But the dining room was charmingly, dignifiedly gay with its flowers, its shining old mahogany, its cabinets of antique china, its crystal, its old portraits—there were two or three of the ancestral Hopkinsons, as well as several of the Fieldings, and sometimes a pleasantly amused expression crossed the mild, indifferent features of young Beverly Moore as he surveyed these evidences of his rela-

tive's tact and skill. The Hendersons and the Larrabees, dry and comfortable in borrowed plumage, exclaimed over their good luck. Mrs. Henderson, who had been a Van Rutherford, and who had married a man who was a Van Stuyvesant by the maternal line, and who had the casual manner of the great—a manner that Anna Fielding had never succeeded in attaining—remarked in a semiaside to her host, who, with Mr. Redpath, of the *Bookworm*, had appeared: "It's Larrabee, the member from Leeds, who got the British government pinked up last session by a lot of socialistic stuff. They're likely to make him a knight to keep him quiet. He can afford to do it, you know—raise rumpuses—she's the daughter of the potted-meat king of Great Britain, and brought him Heaven knows what when he married her. Homely, isn't she?"

Mrs. Larrabee was assuredly not beautiful. All her bones were prominent. She seemed to have an undue share of joints. But she carried her six feet well, and held her taffy-colored head, coiffured like the English princesses', very stiffly high, and she adorned her plainness with many jewels. They flashed from her fingers, with their prominent knuckles. They gleamed about her thin neck. They glittered in combs in her taffy-colored hair. Over her wrist as she entered the dining room hung a bag of gold mesh, sparkling with tiny gems. And as she talked to her host in a clear, hard, English voice she extracted various things from the bag—now a handkerchief, now a bit of powder paper with which she negligently removed a heated flush from her prominent nose, and now a bottle of soda mints, which she asserted she found an invaluable counteractant to American cookery. This was as she drew near the conclusion of her meal. Clarice Tenney, half forgotten in the onslaught of fresh acquaintances, watched her closely, a little look of scorn on her irregular features.

"How do you like the potted-meat product?" Hopkinson asked her in a whisper. By some oversight on his

mother's part, he was seated next to her at the big, noisy luncheon table.

"She's horrid, isn't she? I was just thinking—suppose I had acted like that!"

"As if you could!" Hopkinson achieved a pressure on her fingers under his capacious napkin. He inwardly cursed the fashion that had removed the big, infolding, concealing table-cloth from the luncheon board, and had substituted ridiculous little circles of linen and lace.

The meal, which had been intended as a means of introducing Clarice to the Fielding household, passed off with scarcely a word from her or to her; the foreigners dominated everything. Occasionally Stasia, who sat near Clarice, volunteered some remark; more frequently Beverly tried to engage her in a little conversation. But the real intercourse at the table was between the Larrabees, the Hendersons, the older Fieldings, and Mr. Redpath. Amy Ghent, who, with her two charges, was at the table, was too far away from Clarice to do more than throw her an occasional friendly glance. Gradually, under the continued neglect of her hostess, a flush rose to Clarice's sallow face. She cold-shouldered Hopkinson, and addressed such talk as she could across the table to Beverly Moore. It was rather flippant talk—determinedly flippant. And, of course, when it was at its cheapest, slangiest worst, the lull came in the rest of the table conversation, and all eyes were directed toward the girl, whose clear: "What's a little thing like matrimony among friends?" had just hung poised and echoing in the unexpected silence. Clarice grew a little more deeply flushed at the sound of her sentiment; but she made no apology for it, no explanation of it.

"You seem very modern in your doctrines to an old-fashioned family like ours, Miss Tenney," observed Mrs. Fielding, after a second's pause. "But I believe it's not an uncommon doctrine in your profession. Miss Tenney," she added, in elucidation, to her guests, "is on the stage."

"Clarice was not speaking seriously,

mother," interrupted Hopkinson. "She and Beverly were merely egging each other on to extravagances."

"Don't trouble to explain me, please!" Clarice spoke almost angrily to her fiancé.

"There's an awful deal of laxity abroad in society concerning the marriage tie nowadays," stated Mrs. Larrabee, with the disapprobation of a woman who had not succeeded in acquiring a husband until thirty-odd years of effort had taught her how to appreciate one, and how to deplore any lightness in regard to the bond that held him to her. Then the conversation was turned in her direction again, while she related anecdotes of the shocking state of English high society. And in the way in which Mrs. Fielding turned her attention to her unexpected visitor's remarks there was stately rebuke for her other guest.

"How long are you staying in this country, Mrs. Larrabee?" she asked.

"Isn't it dreadful? They're sailing to-morrow," Mrs. Henderson answered aloud for her friend. "But they've promised to make me another visit next spring."

"Yes," said Mr. Larrabee; "I want to look into your miners' conditions here. This time I have been almost entirely among the manufacturers."

The rainfall ceased about the close of luncheon, and the sun cloudily reappeared. The automobile party, finding their clothes sufficiently dried, attired themselves again in their own, and took a volubly grateful leave of their hosts. Clarice awaited their going with a sort of hectic impatience.

"And now, Hopkinson," she said as the door of the car slammed upon them, and the last farewells from the terrace were called by the rest of the Fieldings, "how soon can I get a train back to town?"

"Oh, my dear, you mustn't rush off like that! Now that that noisy mob has gone, you and mother will have a chance to get together and to learn really to know each—"

"Oh, dear boy, don't be stupid!" she cried irritably. "Your mother and I

know each other now; we understand each other perfectly. She's been abominably rude—that is—I don't want to criticize her to you. Or to any one. But—she doesn't like me. She—you admit she didn't treat me well at luncheon, at which I was supposed to be a special guest, wasn't I? No—I'm all upset, Hoppy. I've got to get away from here or I'll go to pieces—say something horrid. Only tell me when there's a train."

"There's one in twenty-five minutes—the three-fifty-two," answered Hopkinson, looking at his watch. "But—really, Clarice—you know, mother is—well, she's older than you—"

Mrs. Fielding herself glided up to them. Clarice faced her determinedly.

"I'm just asking, Mrs. Fielding," she said, "when I can get a train back to the city. I must be there in time for dinner and"—her eyes defied the older woman's—"my evening performance. I'm on for a turn at the Poop's Short Beach Casino." She flung the words out, her eyes fairly blazing into Mrs. Fielding's cold blue orbs. "So you will forgive me"—she laughed—"if I run away."

"I'm sorry our meeting was so complicated by the storm and the descent of the others," said Mrs. Fielding suavely. Her hand was on the bell as she spoke. To the servant who answered it she said sweetly: "The car for Miss Tenney. She wishes to make the three-fifty-two. Tell Faudraux to put the chains on—the rain has simply deluged the roads. Interesting people—the Larrabees—aren't they, Hop?" she added conversationally.

"I thought him a pompous bore," replied Hopkinson discontentedly. "And she was such a frump as only an Englishwoman can be."

Mrs. Fielding's calm regard seemed to embrace every detail of Clarice's costume as she heard her son declare the departed Mrs. Larrabee a frump. She took ruthless note of the shoddy quality of the frock, of the almost-fashionable tilt of the hat, of the poor gloves, the poor shoes. And she said, with a smile, as she finished her survey:

"Men don't recognize the real thing when they see it, do they, Miss Tenney? In clothes, I mean. That is, young men. Mrs. Larrabee wasn't what we call 'stylish'—horrid word!—but she was real throughout. She did wear more jewelry than is to my liking, to be sure. But perhaps I'm old-fashioned. Shall we go up to my room, Miss Tenney, before you leave? You may want to adjust your hat and veil."

Clarice accepted the invitation. They met Stasia coming out of her mother's study. She looked more animated than she had seemed at luncheon, and her eyes were shining. She said, with an absent-minded warmth, that she was sorry Clarice had to go into town so early, and she was proceeding on her way downstairs when her mother recalled her to the landing.

"What are you planning for the afternoon, Stasia?" she asked. "Don't go away—I want to see you."

"I'm not going away. Beverly is, though. I think he's going into town on the same train with Miss Tenney. He'll—"

"I thought he seemed to admire her at luncheon," interrupted Mrs. Fielding swiftly, mindful of her fears of Beverly. Stasia stared at her stupidly for a second. Then a dull color mounted her face.

"Nonsense, mother! He had planned to take this train in before we came to luncheon. As for admiring her—he was merely civil to her, which the rest of us were not," she added viciously.

"My dear, when your father and I have a chance to listen to a man like Mr. Larrabee, who is making history, I don't think we can be blamed for not devoting all our attention to a young lady who is—er—appearing at Poop's Short Beach Casino! Ah, are you ready already, Miss Tenney? You are to have company into town, I hear. Mr. Moore has an appointment which he will keep by means of the three-fifty-two."

They wandered down the stairs together—the three women. Hopkinson,

waiting for them at the foot, thought he could feel the currents of hostility and criticism that enveloped them. Poor Clarice! It had been an ordeal for her. Doubtless it had been one for his mother, too. But some day they would understand each other—would love each other. He announced his intention of seeing Clarice safely back to the city.

"No need, Hop, old man," said Beverly Moore. "I've got to meet Barber at five, and I am Miss Tenney's to command until then."

"It isn't at all necessary for you to come with me," declared Clarice. "In fact, I'd rather you didn't. A—a thunderstorm always gives me a headache, and I'm going to try to sleep it off, if Mr. Moore will excuse my rudeness, on the train. So please don't come." She looked at him pleadingly, and only Stasia guessed that the pleading was all for him to ignore her words and to insist upon accompanying her. But Hopkinson yielded—yielded with a little rancor in his heart, thanks to the seed of jealousy that his mother planted there by a carefully directed smile and the faintest of shrugs toward Beverly Moore and Clarice.

"At least you don't object to my going as far as the station," he said stiffly.

"It isn't necessary," said Clarice, with equal stiffness. "I'll tell you all good-bye here." And in another minute the car rolled off, bearing only Beverly Moore and Clarice Tenney as passengers.

The whistle of the three-fifty-two, sounding for the crossing just beyond the station, was loud on the summer afternoon air when the hall telephone jangled loudly. Mrs. Fielding, who had been standing still, absently listening to the train signal and absently rejoicing that for the moment at least it denoted the removal of one of her problems, wakened from her trance, and moved to answer the summons. Stasia, curled on the window seat at the back of the hall, and looking unseeingly out into the drenched shrubbery, and into the green orchard be-

yond, heard, without realization, her mother's crisp tones.

"Yes," they announced capably, sweetly, expectantly, "this is Penfield. This is Mrs. Fielding. Oh, Mrs. Henderson, I did not recognize your voice! You are safely home? On my dressing table? I'll send it over immediately. Please don't trouble—the car will be back from leaving Miss Tenney and Beverly Moore at the station in a minute, and I will send it straight over. There it is now. Good-by."

She hung up the receiver, and, turning away, ran briskly up the broad stairs. Stasia watched her with the dull wonder that children immersed in their own emotions often bestow upon their amazing elders, who actually have interest to give to the world of things! With whom had her mother been speaking? What was there in all the universe, her dark, somber gaze seemed to ask, worth all that swift, delicately purposeful motion? Not that she really cared at all. Her mother was on the landing above now, giving directions to Amy Ghent:

"Oh, Miss Amy! I'm glad I caught you. Stop Faudraux, will you, please? He'll have to go out again at once. I want you to go, if you don't mind, over to the Hendersons' with Mrs. Larrabee's bag, which she left on my dressing table. I don't want to trust it to any one but a member of the family," she added flatteringly. "You might take the children."

"I'll call them now," Amy responded, and ran down the stairs to give Faudraux his orders and to find Bob and Linda. On the window seat, Stasia relapsed from listening, and fell again to her listless study of the greenery without. In a minute or two her mother's steps sounded, quick and agitated, on the upper landing.

"Stasia!" she cried. "Call up the Hendersons, will you, while I look in the dining room? Mrs. Larrabee telephoned—or, rather, Esther Henderson for her—that she had left her gold-meshed bag on my dressing table, where she put on her hat. It isn't there. Get her herself to the telephone while I

look. She must have laid it somewhere else."

Stasia shook herself rather languidly from her cushions.

"She probably left it in their own car. Have they looked there?" she asked as she moved toward the telephone.

"I don't know—find out! Find out everything. It isn't here." Her mother's words were cut off by the closing of the dining-room door.

"Oh, Mrs. Henderson—so sorry to trouble you again," said Stasia indolently into the telephone; "but mother doesn't find Mrs. Larrabee's bag on her dressing table, and would like further counsel. Is Mrs. Larrabee sure she left it here? Might she not have dropped it in your car? Or something? Oh, very well!" This last was in answer to Mrs. Henderson's "Wait, and I'll get her herself."

Mrs. Larrabee, arrived at the other end of the wire, was quite sure that she had left her bag on Mrs. Fielding's dressing table.

"I know I had it there," she announced firmly, "because I got my powder papers out of it just before I put on my veil. I never use a strange powder. And I did not have it in the car, because I wanted a soda-mint tablet, and I couldn't have one on account of having left my bag. It's somewhere there in your mother's room—on the dressing table, I supposed, but possibly on a sofa or chair. I went straight from there to the motor, you know."

Stasia said that she would communicate this information to her mother, and she did so. Mrs. Fielding, instead of being becomingly pink, was red with her exertions. All the rooms of her suite were swiftly ransacked. The gold-meshed bag was not in any of them. By that time Amy Ghent and the two children, dressed for their ride, were waiting; the servants, with troubled, ineffective faces, were searching futilely in corners already seen to be empty.

"Ladies is often careless," finally said Hannah, who had been with the Fieldings since Hopkinson was born. "She must have laid it somewhere else."



Miss Tenney finished her act amid a little mild spattering of beery applause.

There isn't any one in this house"—she spoke with proud emphasis—"that would touch it."

"I am sure of that, Hannah," replied Mrs. Fielding. "But it's awfully annoying to have her get the idea that she lost it here. Stasia, I think I'll telephone again. No, I'll ride over there. Miss Amy, I'll take your place — Why, Miss Amy!"

Amy Ghent, grayishly white, was holding to the mahogany stair rail for support. Her eyes were filmed as with pain.

"I've hurt my hand—it's too stupid!" She spoke with some difficulty. "I caught it in the doorjamb in my room just now, and thought it wouldn't bother me. But it's feeling worse and worse." She held out a delicate hand, across the back of which the purple welt of a cruel pinching had sprung into prominence. Hannah, with a murmur

of pity, was on her way to the medicine chest in a second. Mrs. Fielding and Stasia made conventionally soothing and sympathetic exclamations. But when Hannah reappeared with ointments and bandages and began to bind up the maimed hand, they reverted to the bag.

"I'll ride over and try to rouse more recollections in Mrs. Larrabee," announced Anna Fielding. "If she left the thing where she said—if she left it in any part of the house in which she was—it would still be here. It isn't here, and so—" She broke off worriedly. "It seems she had some other valuables in it," she resumed; "some money and some rings that had just come back from the jeweler's by express as she started—a black pearl was one. It's very annoying! It is probably in the bottom of their own automobile."

"There certainly has been nobody here to take the lady's bag," repeated Hannah, in firm and offended tones. "You're not one to change your help, Mrs. Fielding, an' the newest girl you've got you've had seven years. An' the newest man is Faudraux, an' you've had him five; an', besides, he almost never sets foot inside the house. But that's like a careless lady, mislaying things, an' getting the servants suspected."

"Nonsense, Hannah! No one suspects any servants. As you say, we all know them too well. No—there has been absolutely no one—" Then she fell silent suddenly, strangely, and her startled, frightened eyes sought Stasia's. Stasia returned her a look of cold inquiry. She seemed ready to combat any theory of her mother's.

Anna Fielding got rid of the little cordon of grumbling servants. She beckoned Stasia into her room. She shut the door. The tall girl looked down upon her with a bewildered air.

"What on earth, mother—" she began.

"My dear, suppose she did leave it?" whispered her mother.

"If she had left it, as you have said, it would be here," returned Stasia, a little doggedly, as if she were growing tired of the affair.

"Stasia! That girl—we never saw her before! Think how anxious she was to get away. Think how she—"

"Mother, about whom are you talking?" cried Stasia.

"About that Tenney girl—poor Hop's infatuation! She wouldn't wait; she wouldn't let Hop go in with her—Stasia!"

"Oh, fiddlesticks, mother!" cried Stasia, with impatient energy. "How perfectly absurd! Don't let your prejudices run away with you like that. The Larrabee person has simply mislaid her overdressed bag; that's all there is about it. I shouldn't bother about it much. Just tell her that she was mistaken about leaving it here, and let her find it where she did leave it. Or let her get another," she finished callously.

"She didn't seem to me a person like-

ly to make mistakes about her possessions," objected Mrs. Fielding.

"Well, the other girl didn't strike me as likely to take what didn't belong to her!" cried Stasia. And at that inauspicious minute Hopkinson and his father, who had been strolling over to the sheep pastures, came idly into the room. And Anna Fielding, a little overwrought, gave voice to the suspicion that had first come to her as a monstrous nightmare rather than a thought, but which had grown to be a real thing through the very use of words. Hopkinson, in a fury, his father in a mildly protesting fashion, combated the notion. Anna Fielding, who was not used to criticism and opposition, grew a little obstinate.

"At any rate," she said logically, "you will admit that the situation is an embarrassing and painful one. Here is a woman—a very rich and apparently a very careful and methodical person—who claims to have left valuables with us. Now, she is either—er—"

"Lying," interpolated Hopkinson curtly.

"Mistaken," amended his mother, glancing at him reprovingly, "or it was left here. If it was, it has disappeared. Which of the servants, Hopkinson, do you—"

"I don't suspect any of them. But naturally it would be quite as easy for me to suspect them all—or my father, or you, or Stasia here—as Clarice. It is infamous, I tell you!"

"The telephone, ma'am," announced a scared-looking maid. Mrs. Fielding sailed majestically down the hall. When she emerged from her conversation she looked agitated, upset.

"It's perfectly dreadful!" she began. "Mrs. Henderson is as apologetic as possible, but she says that dreadful person demands that I have the servants' 'boxes,' as she calls them, searched. They will simply leave!"

"The lady seems to be a true Briton," observed Mr. Fielding, "with the national determination not to be imposed upon, however she may impose upon others."

"That sort of talk won't keep the

servants," retorted Anna, in a manner that in another woman could only have been called snappy.

"You aren't going to do it, of course, mother?" It was Stasia who spoke. "You aren't going to insult your own people, whom you know, on account of the charge of a perfect stranger, who may have been carrying a brass bag with nothing in it but her powder and her ridiculous digestive tablets, for anything we know! Why, she may be the veriest impostor!"

"Nonsense! Mrs. Henderson has known them for years. But—Eustace, what shall we do?"

"I think we can oblige the lady without losing our servants. I will explain our position to them if you wish. Meantime, send for her, and say that she must be here at the investigation."

The result of Mr. Fielding's diplomacy was success. None of the servants made any protest against the search. Hannah, indeed, avowed, that she had been on the point of suggesting it herself. And Mrs. Larrabee returned, without either her husband or her hosts, but with another person in the big car with her—a detective! Anna Fielding's blue eyes flashed with icy fires when she was apprised of the identity of the rather short, black-mustached, round-headed gentleman who was first seen leaning nonchalantly back in the Hendersons' car, chewing steadily upon a wad of gum.

"Awfully sorry, you know," remarked Mrs. Larrabee, in the briefest apology. "But we're sailing to-morrow. Whatever I did had to be done at once. May have been a sneak thief, you know, since you are so certain of your servants. Was anything else missing?"

Nothing else was missing, the Fieldings united to inform Mrs. Larrabee. And Mr. Jere Green asked if any one had left Penfield since luncheon.

"My cousin, Mr. Beverly Moore, who is visiting here," replied Mrs. Fielding. "Miss—Miss Clarice Tenney, who was a guest at luncheon, and Mr. Redpath, of the *Bookworm*, who was also a guest at luncheon."

Mr. Green demanded intimate details

concerning all three of the absentees. This was after he had made a thorough and fruitless investigation of the servants' quarters.

"Too bad to put you to all this inconvenience," murmured Mrs. Larrabee from time to time. "But the black pearl was really quite valuable. And the clasp of the bag itself was a seal sapphire of which I was very proud—really a wonder."

"Don't apologize, please, for wanting your valuables," Mrs. Fielding would mechanically reply to this observation. To Mr. Green she gave as colorless an account of her luncheon guests as possible; she even forbore to let her voice declare her suspicions of Clarice.

"This Miss—er—Tenney, now," said Mr. Green persuasively, when he had noted down the data supplied concerning Beverly Moore and Mr. Redpath. "Er—known her long?"

"I met her for the first time to-day," said Anna.

"Er—you say she's on the stage?"

"Yes."

"What company?"

Hopkinson, who had been looking explosive for some seconds, but who had obeyed his mother's unspoken prayer to him to keep still, suddenly started to speak. To forestall him, his mother hurried on:

"Vaudeville. With—Poop's Short Beach Casino."

"Aha! That's better!" cried Mr. Green jubilantly. "Of course, it's never safe in this business to guess anything, but a young lady doin' stunts at summer amusement resorts is a heap more likely to think she needs sparklers than a lawyer or a magazine feller. Of course, it may have been servants. They had time to hide the thing anywhere before we got here. But, takin' it by an' large, I'd say that Miss—what did you say her name was?" He referred to his notes.

"The young lady, sir," remarked Hopkinson, with elaborate suavity of manner, and nostrils that dilated with the lust to kill, "the young lady—"

"Hopkinson!" entreated his mother.

"Is my affianced wife?" He came quite close to Mr. Green, and his fists were menacingly closed. Mr. Green backed a precipitate step. Mrs. Larrabee murmured: "Dear me, how interesting! How painful!" Stasia walked over to her brother, and put a sisterly hand on his arm.

"I agree with my brother absolutely in this," she cried resonantly. "If the rest of the family met Miss Tenney only to-day, why"—she turned courteously toward Mrs. Larrabee—"our acquaintance with Mrs. Larrabee is equally recent. The whole thing is unbearable. It is, of course, too bad that Mrs. Larrabee has lost or mislaid her bag—"

"I never mislay anything," Mrs. Larrabee interrupted her to say quite firmly and convincingly.

"But I think that we have had as much of this private inquisition as is bearable. Have we not, papa?" Stasia turned to her father, who sat playing with his eyeglass string and looking half bored, half distressed.

"I think that we have done all that we can, Mrs. Larrabee," he said, raising his eyes to that irate lady's face. "I should suggest that all further proceedings be left to your lawyers. You may be sure that we are all ready to cooperate with them in every way."

And so the conference ended. By and by a silent, distract household gathered about a very belated dinner table. Only Hopkinson was absent. No one mentioned his absence, though every one was poignantly aware of it. There was little conversation. Stasia looked at once restive and melancholy, her father gently bored. Mrs. Fielding struggled in vain for her accustomed air of suave mastery over fate; and Amy Ghent, with her bandaged hand and her pale, unhappy face, was even more silent than usual. Anna Fielding thought that she voiced the unspoken thought of all when she said to her husband, after they had drunk their coffee on the terrace in a futile effort to pretend that nothing had happened: "Well, if he only doesn't marry her to-night! But that is what he will want to do."

CHAPTER III.

Poop's Short Beach Casino did not represent Clarice Tenney's professional ideals, but merely the summer's possibilities. At the best of times her engagements had not been brilliant, and this season a long spring's illness had both delayed her in obtaining a summer engagement and had made it expedient that she should not be overfastidious in her acceptance of one that offered. But Poop's Short Beach Casino was anathema to her tastes. It was a crowded, noisy resort at the northern end of Manhattan Island; there was not even the sound of the sea to drown the shrill music of blatant orchestras, of mechanical piano players, of the whirring machinery of scenic railroads and routes through "Dante's Inferno"—Mr. Poop's particular triumph. There were no sea breezes to temper the odor of popcorn, of frankfurters, of beer. It was altogether a detestable place, and the few feet of river front that had furnished the ingenious Poop with a title for his amusement resort did not redeem it in the least to Clarice's ideas.

When, on the evening of the day she had visited Penfield, she made her hot, lassitudinous journey on the subway to the scene of her labors, there was a new look of bitterness on her small, irregular, charming face. Her lips made a hard line of red across the summer pallor of her skin; her eyes glittered darkly, ominously. The contrast between the beautiful, orderly, smooth-flowing life of which she had caught a glimpse at luncheon and her own seemed to harden the fibers of her heart.

The little performance that she gave in the big concert hall on Poop's place was timed for half past nine. She was impatient for it to be over that she might go home and think upon the injustices of her lot. It was a delicately pleasing, trifling, little "act," not particularly popular with Poop's patrons, and somewhat precariously retained by her, as she knew, because of an ancient association of Poop's with her family

—a bit of sentimentality that his practical sense threatened from week to week, but had not yet been quite able to overcome. He came into the hall to-night a little before the time when Clarice was to appear. He glanced over it with a critical eye; there must be more "ginger" in the piano player's selections, more agility about the waiters, more life, more dash, more spicy allurement about the whole thing. He scowled a little, made a low-toned suggestion to the nearest waiter, glowered darkly upon the shifter of numbers on the stage, and even more darkly as he realized who was about to follow the Knife-swallowing 'ap, the Wonder of the Orient. And then, as Clarice's bird-like whistle preceded her appearance from the wings, he became aware of a man—young, well dressed, eager—who was staring toward the platform with an expression of the utmost intensity.

"A gentleman!" exclaimed Poop, in a surprise that was not particularly flattering to the social status or the personal qualities of his habitués. "Well, who'd have thought that!" He whistled softly behind his teeth, and his eyes took the direction of the young man's. There was certainly no accounting for tastes, he told himself, as Clarice tripped on.

When, reconnoitering further, with an interested eye, Mr. Poop saw that the young man, despite the obvious fact that he had been waiting for Miss Tenney's appearance, seemed to shrink with pain from her performance, his managerial instinct decided that it was surely time she should receive her dismissal.

"I've known it all along," he told himself. "And here's this guy that must be mashed on her—even he can't stand it. It's time I did it. I'm a soft-hearted beggar. Just because her father and mine—" Mr. Poop trailed off into filial recollections. Miss Tenney finished her act amid a little mild spattering of beery applause, and Hopkinson Fielding approached Mr. Poop as a person in authority, and begged to have a note taken back to the young lady.

"What d'ye think of her act?" asked Mr. Poop, after negligently giving a waiter Hopkinson's note to carry behind to Clarice.

"Very pleasing," answered Hopkinson absently.

"Not much ginger to it," lamented Mr. Poop. "Bless your soul, I know it! But when my father was down an' out her dad give him a helpin' hand—a square meal, if you come to that. Great man in those days, Mr.—well, I won't mention private names; Tenney's a stage name with her. Kept his horses, had his own billiard room. Had pretty much anything he wanted up Rochester way. An' my dad had the clothes he stood in, an' they weren't worth much. Now"—Poop's neck inclined toward the stage; his manner expressed volumes on the vicissitudes of life—"now look at us. Her down an' out, me helpin' her for the old sake's sake."

"Very commendable of you, I'm sure," said Hopkinson Fielding, glaring at Mr. Poop as if he would enjoy committing murder. The beery waiter, napkin over arm, strolled back.

"She'll be down in a few minutes, she says," he announced negligently.

"Here's something that always gets them," Mr. Poop informed his patron genially as the performers in a noisy domestic duologue appeared. "Pretty little woman, eh?"

Hopkinson walked away from Mr. Poop's attempted nudge. What was the use of being diplomatic with him? Clarice must leave these surroundings—must marry him at once. For he had, as his family had foreseen, decided that the swiftest refutation of all charges against her, the surest solvent of all suspicions, would be their immediate marriage. Outside the concert hall, among the manifold other attractions of the Casino, he told her—not that exactly, but that he wanted to marry her at once—that night.

"Let us get away from this noise," was Clarice's answer. They walked back through noisy lanes of light; they passed the territory dominated by Poop, and that controlled by his rival,

McCluskey; they climbed up from the river bank into a strange part of Manhattan Island, where still lingered a few country traces—a squatter's shanty on a cliff, a clump of lilac bushes, a barking dog—among the new rows of brick apartments and tenements.

"Now," said Clarice, when they had come into comparative quiet and solitude, "what has happened?"

In those emergencies requiring diplomacy accompanied by a touch of deception, Hopkinson was not at his happiest. He looked at his fiancée now with an expression compounded quaintly of obstinacy, bafflement, and affection. Clarice, schooled for many years in the reading of faces, caught it under the glare of an electric sign outside a canvas moving-picture house, the summer "taxpayer" of a vacant lot.

"Has your family declared that you shall never marry me with its consent?" she asked. "And are you, you dear, impractical boy, trying to forestall my knowledge of their decision?" There was a humid tenderness in the eyes she raised to his.

"Not at all!" declared Hopkinson resonantly, glad that he was able to make a truthful denial of her supposition. "But isn't it enough that I love you, that I have, after all, enough to keep us going modestly, that you love me, that you need me?"

"Hoppy, dear, those things have been true since—I was going to say since the first day we met! For I truly think I loved you from the moment you made your way to me across that horrid wreck—" She shuddered. "Ah, I hope I shall never be in another railroad accident, even if that one did give you to me. But all the things you say have been true almost from the first. And I have told you, and you have agreed with me, that just because I was doing distasteful work, living under a cloud, it was all the more necessary to my pride that our engagement receive the sanction of your family. I simply can't give up that little shred of self-respect. I've had to lower my colors so often, so much—" Her voice broke, and Hopkinson, indifferent to

the sparse population of Two Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street, put his arm about her shoulder.

"Darling," he said gently, "don't you see that is just it? I want your colors up again. I want to show, in the eyes of all the world, the honor I have for you. As for my people, my mother more especially—she may fight against our marriage as long as she thinks there is a chance of winning out; she's an ambitious old dear, and worldly in her way. She would like me to restore the waning glories of the house of Fielding—not that she openly admits them to be waning. Nevertheless, she's canny. She always accepts an actual situation. Once we are married, she will accept that situation. Father always gently saunters along in her wake. Stasia is a rebellious soul, who hasn't found herself yet, but she's a sympathetic sister. Come, dearest, look at it sensibly. Once the thing is done, my mother will make the best of it. She won't admit the critical world to her confidence. And I can't bear this life you're leading—the risks of it—the grime of it. Marry me to-morrow morning, dear! We'll be the first at the license bureau. Won't you do it, Clarice? And send that swine—Poop—to the right-about? And come with me to a little place I know of in the Maine woods, where you will forget every hard experience, every bitterness of all these years. Or, if you'd rather, we'll step aboard a steamer Saturday morning, and will spend the summer in Holland; do you remember you told me you wanted to spend a season there among the canals and the tulip beds and the Rembrandts and the Dutch caps? Only marry me, dear, and by the end of the summer you will recall the past six years only as a nightmare, a bad dream."

"And my father?" said Clarice quietly.

Hopkinson's eloquence was silenced. For half a block he walked along by her side without a word. She waited, tense, vibrant. She did not take her eyes from his face, now shadowy in the darkness of the summer night, now il-

lumined by the street lights. By and by he spoke:

"We should do all that we could for your father when—when the time came."

He spoke, however, with constraint.

"You see!" cried Clarice. "Ah, you see, Hopkinson! If you married me with the consent and welcome of your family it would be different. I could do as it seemed best to us afterward. But if you marry me against their wishes, and they come around, from motives of policy, or laziness, or whatever you please to call them, to receiving me, I could never dare to—force that upon them. I should simply be obliged to concede them something in my turn. And that would be vile—impossible. To sacrifice him—when he will need me so dreadfully. Oh, dear boy, I was wrong ever to let you persuade me to an engagement. It is bound to be unfortunate. I am destined for unhappiness."

"Nonsense!" cried Hopkinson sturdily. "You are destined for whatever lot you choose. We all are. And you must remember that if you choose unhappiness for your own you will be giving me the same sort of a deal. You've got to consider me, Clare, dearest."

And then he went on with his pleading. He sketched pleasing pictures of the future; he contrasted it with the harassed and dingy present; he promised anything she desired. And finally she yielded.

"Very well, Hopkinson," she said, a little sadly, a little solemnly. "Since you will make no objection to my doing my whole duty by my father, in whatever way seems best— Oh, I hope that we may never regret it!"

"We shall be happy all our days because of it." His voice was firm in spite of its jubilation. "Now, then, you are to hurry home, so as to be the very first bride turned out at city hall to-morrow. We will breakfast together and go for our license, and be married at once by an alderman, or whoever does the job, in the city hall—"

"Oh, no, no!"

"Oh, yes, yes! I'm going to have that matter settled with all possible dispatch. We'll be married again if you wish in all the churches in New York. But there are to be no slip-ups in this affair. Oh, my dear, how happy I am to have it all settled!"

But, thanks to Mrs. Larrabee, it was not yet all settled. Mrs. Larrabee and a June dearth of important news conspired together to defer the trip to the Maine woods, the trip to Holland, even the trip to the city hall. For when Mr. Hopkinson Fielding presented himself at the door of Mrs. Le Ferdinand's theatrical boarding house, on Ninth Street, Lottie, the large negress who was slopping with dirty water the shallow flight of white marble steps that gave access to the old-fashioned dwelling, fished in the loose front of her stained calico blouse, and presented him with a note, held gingerly between the tips of two black, soapy shining fingers.

"Miss Clare Tenney, she-all ask me give yuh dis," stated Lottie, smiling pleasantly. Hopkinson looked at her with consternation, and for a second made no effort to possess himself of the letter. Finally he took it, and, still staring resentfully and questioningly at Lottie, opened it. Then he removed his accusing eyes from her face long enough to read.

"My dear, dear boy," the note began, and a wave of warmth and hope flowed again to his heart that had been so suddenly paralyzed. "My dear, dear boy: I could not sleep for doubts and hopes. And very early this morning I encountered Lottie in the hall. She gave me Mrs. Le Ferdinand's *World* to read—and I see why you wanted me to marry you at once. Somehow or other, your people have learned about father, and, of course—of course I see what they suspect. They have accused me—among themselves—of taking the terrible Englishwoman's showy bag. And you—oh, you are good and dear! But I couldn't, Hopkinson, I couldn't! I couldn't marry you now—not until that suspicion, at least, is proved unfounded. I love you utterly, never more than

now, never so much as now, when you have shown such loyalty, such tenderness to me. But I won't let you do it.

CLARICE."

"Where," cried Mr. Hopkinson Fielding of Lottie, beaming, beady-eyed, curious, and sympathetic, upon him, "where is she? Where is Miss Tenney?"

"Miss Tenney she's done gone, sah," answered Lottie importantly. "With her bag, sah. An' her trunk to foller when she sends de missus word. All done in a hour after I done give her de paper."

"I'll find her at Poop's," muttered Hopkinson, "tonight."

"Yes, sah; thank yuh, sah," said Lottie, concealing a coin in the capacious cache of her blouse.

At the corner news stand he bought a copy of the *World*. And across the first page he saw that Mrs. Larrabee, on the eve of her departure for England, had obtained more "space" for an interview concerning the theft of her valuable hand bag and the jewels it contained than had been granted her husband for the airing of his views on American manufacturing conditions.

And as for finding Clarice that night at Mr. Poop's pleasure pavilion, he encountered only Mr. Poop, rather irate concerning the brevity of the notice that Miss Tenney had given him, though he was obviously pleased to get rid of her. And young Fielding reflected upon the chance beginning of his friendship with the girl, upon his lack of knowledge of all her acquaintances and all her ties except the one tragic one with her father, serving a term of imprisonment for embezzlement; he realized that it might be difficult for him to achieve at once his ambition, which was to find



"Miss Tenney she's done gone, sah," answered Lottie importantly.

her, to snatch her to his heart, and never again to let her escape the shelter of his love.

CHAPTER IV.

The third night after the departure of Mrs. Larrabee for England, Amy Ghent awoke with a sudden start. The intervening period had, perhaps, been enough to develop nerves in any woman of sensibility. There had been spasmodic intrusions of detectives to Penfield. Mrs. Larrabee, departing for her home, had by no means obliterated her memory from the minds of her accidental hosts. In order to stimulate real effort among the gentlemen whom she had set upon the trail of her stolen jewels, she had employed two detective firms, and she had offered privately to each a reward for the earliest clew leading to the recovery of her property. In consequence of her admirable thoroughness and energy, there had been

comparatively few moments of the first three days after her departure when Penfield or Chestnut Hill, the residence of the Hendersons, had been free from nerve-racking surprises in the shape of strangers lurking in the shrubberies, emerging from the laundries, suddenly appearing in the stables, even reconnoitering in the libraries and drawing-rooms. Mrs. Henderson, over the telephone, had that very afternoon declared rebellion.

"I can't apologize to you sufficiently, Mrs. Fielding," she had said, "for bringing that woman to your house. I'm not going to put up with this surveillance any longer, and I advise you also to rebel. It's an outrage. I don't care whether the contents of her bag were more valuable than the contents of the Bank of England, I'm not going to submit any longer to having my servants demoralized and my household upset on account of them. I always knew that she had the tenacity of a bulldog when she wanted anything, but this is the first time I've had to suffer from it, or to subject my friends to it."

At which words Mrs. Fielding had bridled a little with pleasure, and had decided that the whole affair was not so unfortunate, after all. For never before had Mrs. Henderson, the dashing, the "smart" Mrs. Henderson called her "friend." Oh, distinctly it was not entirely a misfortune that had befallen her!

Her neighbor's resolution had strengthened her own. She was in nominal, as well as in actual, control of Penfield, for Eustace, the peace loving, had retired from its detective-ridden borders on the second day, declaring to his wife that a man could do no writing in such an atmosphere. Anna, according to her well-drilled custom, did not allow her wifely skepticism as to his work to appear. As for her son, Hopkinson had put up at his club in town ever since the day of the unfortunate luncheon—sullen, doubtless, over the suspicions cast upon his fiancée. But Mrs. Fielding did not particularly mind his sulks, as she termed them.

Her suspicions were genuine ones; she was not insincere or merely vengeful against the unwelcome candidate for admission to her family in saying that she thought the girl ought to be made the subject of an investigation. And when, on the third day after she had dropped this hint to one of Mrs. Larabee's horde, he returned to her with the information that Miss Tenney had disappeared both from her boarding house and her place of employment on the day after the luncheon, she felt more strongly intrenched than ever in her theory, more justified in her first opposition to Hopkinson's engagement.

"You see!" she cried triumphantly to Stasia, who had rudely and virulently combated the suspicion. "You see! She has fled! What more do you need to convince you? She has taken the jewels out of New York, where the detectives say it would be impossible for the thief to pawn them without being caught. She is going to pawn them somewhere else. She has given up her work because she can afford to—"

"Fiddlesticks, mother!" Stasia had replied, in an angry, weary voice. She pressed her hand to her forehead as she spoke. "Couldn't the poor girl have married Hop any minute she wanted to? And do you suppose the few dollars, or the few hundred dollars, or whatever it may be she can get for the trinkets, would strike her as better worth while commercially than marrying Hop? It's the sheerest nonsense!"

"Beverly doesn't think so," retorted Mrs. Fielding, quoting masculine opinion weightily, after the good, old, feminine habit. Beverly Moore was the only one of her men left for her to quote, a fact that gave his judgments a value they did not always have in her eyes. "Beverly doesn't agree with you, and Beverly is a lawyer."

"Oh, Bev!" cried the girl, with a little accent of affectionate scorn. "He agrees with the last speaker. He loves to speculate, to formulate. I am sure he would be quite willing to work up a good brief for the theory that you took the bag—or I—if any one gave him that thought to develop. As for

disappearances—well, dad has disappeared since the blamed thing was stolen!"

"Eustasia!" cried her mother. "You are not in the least amusing!"

And so, with restless debate, with futile speculation, with irritated speech, the days had passed until Mrs. Henderson's announcement had encouraged Mrs. Fielding to rid her premises of the searchers after clews. And it was on the night after they had gone that Amy Ghent, as she reported, wakened with a sudden start in her big bedroom in the rear wing of the second story, next the children's night nursery.

The excitements, the interruptions of the past few days had told upon her. Always pale, she had grown paler. Always rather quiet, she had grown quite silent. Always wide-eyed, she had become hollow-eyed as well. She alone of all the household, except Stasia, had advanced no theories, formulated no cases. Indeed, she succeeded in preventing much discussion of the affair in her presence, for she had said, with her gently authoritative air, that it was upsetting to Bob and Linda to hear it discussed, and she was usually with Bob and Linda. Even the quiet evenings in the drawing-room or library, to which she was used when there were no large parties at Penfield, she gave up, and went to bed soon after her charges.

To-night, so she explained later, she awakened with a start, and sat up in bed, listening for a repetition of the sound that had roused her. It was not immediately repeated. She scolded herself for fancifulness, for nerves, and sank back against her pillows. But before she had dozed again she heard the noise once more—a sound in the rooms below her. All this she reported to Mrs. Fielding the next morning.

"After a second or two," Amy said, in describing the occurrence, "I thought I might have been mistaken in placing the sound. I thought that perhaps it was Bob, walking again in his sleep. So I got up, put on my wrapper and slippers, and went across the night nursery to the children's sleeping porch.

I carried my little electric torch, and, of course, as I crossed the hall the light may have flashed up and down it. I found both the children asleep and quiet. I pulled the covers up over them and started back to my own room. And then it occurred to me that the noise must, after all, have been made downstairs in the dining room. I felt that I could not rest unless I went downstairs—that bag affair has rather upset me—and yet I was ashamed to call any one to go with me. It would so likely prove to be nothing at all. So I slipped down the back way, and came into the dining room through the back hall and the butler's pantry. And there I discovered the silver, piled for moving, tied in tablecloths. And then—you know the rest. I ran as quickly as I could through the house, up the front stairs, and waked you."

It was easy enough to arouse most of the household. Every one was sleeping the uncertain, nervous sleep of people living with an unsolved mystery—every one, that is, except Stasia. She had been sunk in heaviness, and she was not present at the first view of the attempted burglary. That was attended by the chatelaine of Penfield, Mrs. Fielding, her second cousin once removed, Beverly Moore, tousled, sleepy, cherubic, in his pink dressing gown; by Amy Ghent, with terror showing in her eyes and on her face, though she kept her nerves under control; by the butler, Hannah, and an ejaculatory, huddling half dozen of under servants. And there certainly, plain for them all to see, was the Penfield silver gathered into piles and tied into tablecloths, the Penfield silver from the sideboard drawers and from the silver tables and the cabinets in the room. It had never been the custom in the Fielding household to lug all this metal away at night and to lock it up in some securer hiding place. Mr. Fielding had averred that a burglary insurance was cheaper than a private storage warehouse, and he had added that with silver at its present market value only an idiot would dream of making away with it.

And here—to-night—was he refuted. Anna Fielding wished that he were at home to see the collapse of his airy edifice of unjustifiable opinion.

"But, ma'am," said Hannah, the thoughtful, to her mistress, as the little group surveyed the evidences of the intended depredation with a variety of exclamation, "but, ma'am, they may be still hiding in the house!"

"Cousin Anna, where is Stasia?" demanded Beverly Moore, in the same second.

There was a rush for Stasia's room. She might somehow be in danger. She had some jewels; but Stasia was peacefully asleep, and rather resented it that she should be roused from the first unbroken slumber she had captured for nights. However, once awake, she joined the searchers bravely enough—even recklessly. No burglar, however, was discovered in hiding; and, moreover, no door was found unlocked by which a burglar might have entered. Windows were open, to be sure, but they were all securely screened, and on no screen was there any mark of tampering.

"I suppose we shall have to have the detectives back to-morrow on our own account," said Mrs. Fielding. "By the way, let us all see if there is anything else missing—anything really missing, I mean."

She and Beverly went to the safe in her husband's dressing room, to which she had the combination. The lock responded gently to her manipulations; the door swung open. Within were boxes containing jewelry, papers, stock certificates. Here also were the manuscript pages of the novel upon which Eustace was now engaged. Each box held upon the inside of its lid a list of its contents—that had been the work of Anna, who had been trained in businesslike ways years ago in Miss O'Keefe's office. She ran through the lists, and compared them with the contents. Nothing was missing. She breathed a sigh of relief.

"We should do well to go to your room and see if anything valuable is missing," Beverly suggested.

"There are only a few rings and pins on my dressing table," she answered. "I am a careful person, and lock up my valuables when I am through wearing them. But Stasia is not. We'd better go to your room, Stasia, and see if anything is missing."

"Very well," answered Stasia indifferently and briefly. And she turned to lead the way to her room. The strangely gowned procession followed. She switched on the lights in her dressing room as they passed within the door, and when they reached the dressing table, with another turn of her fingers, she snapped on the brilliant mirror lights. Between the velvet pad and the silver rim of a little pincushion she felt for the key of the top drawer of her dressing table. The little silver key unlocked the drawer, and she drew out a leather jewel case and opened it.

She and her mother ran the bright collection of baubles through their hands. Mrs. Fielding murmured recognition of many things: "Oh, your gold beads! You haven't worn them for a year or two. And the silver bracelet Hannah gave you when you were ten years old! And that comb you wanted at sixteen! Why do you keep such a lot of worthless junk, dear? Ah, there's Aunt Harriet's sapphire cross! You ought to have that reset; the stones are very fine. Your diamond lavallière—your first watch—your second watch—your new watch—how do you tell the time with these all locked up? Ruby ring, diamond ring, topazes—" Her voice trailed off into mere murmurs of enumeration. But when the last compartment had been emptied of its treasures she turned to her daughter with a startled face.

"Stasia!" she cried, in a frightened voice. "Stasia, where is your Grandmother Fielding's necklace?"

Stasia blinked sleepily at her mother for a second.

"Grandmother Fielding's necklace?" she repeated, as if she had difficulty in recalling that particular article of adornment.

"Yes, yes!" cried Anna Fielding, quick in proportion to Stasia's dull-

ness, impatient, tense, rasped. "Yes! Her necklace of pearls and emeralds. For Heaven's sake, don't stand there as if you didn't know what I was talking about!"

"Oh, that!" cried Stasia, with an accent of comprehension. "Oh, of course! That's in town—at Tiffany's. I took it in to be cleaned a while ago, and I had forgotten all about it."

Mrs. Fielding regarded her tall daughter as if she would greatly enjoy shaking her.

"Really," she remarked dryly, "I should think that you had the fortune of the Rothschilds, to be so indifferent, so oblivious, about the most distinguished thing that you possess."

"I'm so sleepy, mother," said Stasia, in half-whimsical apology.

"You'll all be mere rags in the morning, you women," Beverly Moore struck in, with a voice of authority. "You should all go back to bed. I'll telephone the constable's office, and Baum and I will keep watch the rest of the night, though, of course, the burglars have been frightened into the next State by this time. But you women must go back to bed and get some sleep."

"That's the first really sensible word I've heard since I was routed out of my bed. Thank you, Bev!" cried Stasia. Then she turned with a kindly light in her eyes toward Amy Ghent.

"Are you unstrung and frightened, Miss Amy?" she asked. "Don't you want me to come and sleep next to you in the night nursery?"

"Oh, I shan't be frightened again," answered Amy.

"You needn't be," Beverly assured her. "I'll have the men stationed here and there about the house for the rest of the night. I suppose Hannah and Baum had better gather up the silver and put it back where it belongs, Cousin Anna?" he added, turning to Mrs. Fielding.

"Yes," she nodded. She looked weary and old in the bright light. Stasia bent a glance more tender than usual upon her. They all moved out into the hall and went toward the stairs.

"Want me to camp out in your dressing room, mater?" she asked. "To be a bulwark between you and danger?"

"Nonsense, child! Go back to bed and finish the sleep you have been bawling so loudly."

But as they walked through the hall together Stasia had yet another remark to make. She made it earnestly.

"At least, this must convince you that that poor sweetheart of Hopkinson's had nothing to do with the theft the other day," she said.

"Why should it?" Mrs. Fielding combed her daughter, but without much spirit.

"Why should it!" echoed Stasia. "Well, you don't suspect her of this, do you?"

"No. But this is not the other day."

"Of course it isn't. But it is fairly evident that whoever succeeded in snatching Mrs. Larrabee's purse the other day came back to-night to make a haul of the things he hadn't been able to grab the first time. Isn't that reasonable?"

"Nothing is reasonable!" cried Anna Fielding. "Don't let us talk any more to-night, Stasia, dear. I'm too tired to think," she added, with a new note in her capable voice that brought a sudden softness to Stasia's eyes and made her stoop and embrace the gallant, delicate figure.

"She shan't be bothered—so she shan't! Good night, mumsie, dear!" She used her childhood's title for her mother, and she gave her a warm kiss. "If you'd only give way oftener," she added, with a laugh, "and would only not be so able to manage us all and to take care of us all, you don't know how I should take care of you!"

"Good night, dear. Sleep well. Sleep late," responded her mother. And she closed the door of her room behind her.

Stasia went on toward her own room with slow, lagging steps and a half frown on her white forehead. When she reentered her dressing room, still brilliantly alight, and surveyed the dressing table, with the contents of the jewel case lying on the table, she gave

a little, contemptuous laugh. She swept them pell-mell into the drawer, locked it, and replaced the key in its hiding place.

"Bits of colored glass and beads," she said. "One could still buy a large part of America with them!" She sat on the edge of a couch, and fell apparently into study of more serious or more personal problems than the prevalence of a taste for gauds in civilized society. After a long time she rose, with a sigh, and switched off the lights above the table.

"I wonder!" she said as she passed into her bedroom. "I wonder!" But no answer being vouchsafed to her speculation, she sighed again, turned off the bedroom lights, and threw herself upon her bed.

CHAPTER V.

By the time the Fielding household was assembled for a late breakfast on the morning of the finding of the silver, much business had been transacted. Mrs. Fielding, taking her place behind an ancestral coffeepot, the sight of which always compensated her for the trouble of coming downstairs to breakfast, found a whole sheaf of communications beside her plate.

"Mr. Beverly said for me to call your attention to these, ma'am," said Hannah, who in this period of stress was allowing no subordinate the rich privilege of immediate service to the family. "He has been telephoning and telegraphing, ma'am."

Anna Fielding raised her lorgnette to her bright eyes, and proceeded to examine the messages.

"Telephoned Cousin Eustace at Southampton; he will be back on the earliest possible connecting train," she read. "Telephoned O'Brien & Shadwell; they will have two men here immediately. Telephoned Constable Shreir; he's away on vacation; his deputy has been here looking for clews in the grass. Found none—naturally, as there has been no rainfall for four days."

Anna Fielding read these memoranda

aloud to Stasia, who ate cantaloupe with a relish, and to Amy Ghent, who toyed listlessly with her fruit.

"What does dear papa think he is going to do about it?" inquired Stasia, with cheerful, filial irreverence. "Or any of them, for the matter of that?"

"Here's a letter from O'Brien & Shadwell," announced Mrs. Fielding, picking up an envelope adorned with the names of that eminent firm of detectives, and with a large, unblinking eye as a sort of trade-mark. She tore it open, adding as she did so: "It must be about the gold purse; it was mailed yesterday." She read it, gave a little, smothered exclamation, and handed it across the table to her daughter. Stasia read, and an unusual flush glowed upon her clear olive skin.

"I don't believe a word of it!" she cried tempestuously. "And even if it is true, it means nothing—nothing."

Mrs. Fielding tried in vain to direct her impetuous daughter's attention to the fact that there was a comparative stranger present at the table in the person of Miss Ghent, and to suggest that she did not wish the contents of the communication made public. Stasia looked inquiringly at her parent's contorted features, and then, interpreting the expression, disobediently disregarded it.

"Oh, what's the use of keeping quiet?" she demanded brusquely. "Quiet before Miss Amy, who knows us better than we do ourselves, I dare say. Who's known all about us for seven years. And who knows the cruel things you said and thought about that girl—you remember, Miss Amy? The girl who lunched here that unfortunate day? Miss Tenney, a—a friend of Hop's? You know that, just because mother has a narrow-minded dislike to stage people——"

"I can't allow you to talk in that way, Eustasia," interrupted Mrs. Fielding, with dignity. "I have the highest respect for the artists of the legitimate stage. I was never more honored than when Miss Barrymore dined with us. But—er——"

"But except for Miss Barrymore and

Mrs. Kendal and a few like those," Stasia went on impulsively, "mother doesn't think them orderly human beings—"

"If you will excuse me, Mrs. Fielding, I will go and find the children," suggested Amy Ghent.

"But you've eaten no breakfast!" protested Mrs. Fielding kindly.

"She's being tactful, poor dear," ejaculated Stasia. "She doesn't want to give me a chance to make injudicious confidences. She wants to spare herself the pain of watching you jump on me."

Amy smiled rather wanly, and did not deny the imputation.

"No confidences would be injudicious given to you, Miss Amy," said Mrs. Fielding handsomely. "I haven't any desire to make mysteries. And it is true that I couldn't help thinking—I have a little logic in my make-up, which my daughter hasn't inherited—that there was a possibility of Mrs. Larabee's bag having been taken by the only person who had a chance to take it who was unknown to us. Miss Tenney was a complete stranger, except to my son, and I don't consider that any young man's judgment is worth a hill of beans"—sometimes Mrs. Fielding dropped the stately for the homely in her diction—"in regard to any young woman. He is a chivalrous lad—Hopkinson—and he met Miss Tenney under circumstances that gave her a sort of glamour—in a railroad wreck where he rescued her from a burning car. Naturally his judgment is befogged. But—do you blame me for having the thought come to my mind, Miss Amy? She was alone in the room with the bag for a few minutes. She was a complete stranger to us. Her profession—or her place in it—gives us no security as to her—er—standards. Do you blame me? Stasia has made it a personal matter," she added. She showed real feeling, real chagrin against her daughter, a real desire to be upheld by her governess at least.

"I suppose it was a very natural suspicion," answered Amy Ghent. "Though she did not seem to me—"

"Nor to me!" struck in Anna quickly. "But—I don't suppose that medical science itself has yet completely mastered the subject of the kleptomaniac impulse." She rolled the words over with a relish. "That, of course, would be it—a kleptomaniac impulse. Well—feeling as I did, and being closely questioned as to the persons who had access to my dressing room, what was I to do? Say nothing about her? I merely gave the man from O'Brien & Shadwell's office her name, and admitted that she was a stranger to me. At the end of two days they informed me that she had left her boarding house and her place of employment. Rather suspicious, don't you think, Miss Amy? Or at least a strange coincidence. And now this morning— Stasia, give me the letter!" she ended triumphantly.

Stasia handed the missive across the table to her mother. She looked sulky.

"I declare I don't see how you can do it," she said. "It's all too farcical. I bet you a doughnut that that absurd, pompous woman has the bag in the bottom of her trunk at this moment!"

"And now this morning," proceeded Mrs. Fielding, as if Stasia had not spoken, "comes a letter from O'Brien & What's-his-name, saying that Tenney is not her real name; that her real name is Derwent, and that"—she glowed with a sense of vindication as she faced her governess—"her father is serving a term of twelve years in State's prison for embezzlement. Does heredity mean nothing?"

"Her father wasn't a sneak thief, you know," insisted Stasia.

"Oh, the poor girl!" cried Amy Ghent.

"I quite agree with you," said Anna Fielding crisply. But her tone was hard. "I agree with you all the more if—if my instinctive suspicions are justified, and if it is shown that she did—er—purloin—"

"Pinch, mother," suggested Stasia flippantly. "Make it as cheap and horrid as you can."

"The bag," finished Mrs. Fielding, with an angry glance at Stasia. "For with such a moral obliquity she would



"You've got the robber right here in the house with you. This woman is a thief!"

be even more to be pitied than if she is merely poor and friendless and the innocent daughter of a guilty man."

"Of course, those wretched detectives will never in this world let up on her now that you have set them after her," meditated Stasia gloomily. "I don't see why they report to you, anyway. You didn't hire them. The precious Mrs. Larrabee is their client."

At the hall door there was the sound of animated, deep voices, followed by the tread of masculine feet. The women ceased their conversation, and looked expectantly in the direction of the noise. Beverly Moore entered the room, with Hopkinson and another tall man in tow. Mrs. Fielding gave a little cry.

"John!" she exclaimed. "Brother John! Why—when—where—how did—"

"I'll tell you when, where, and how, mother," answered Hopkinson gayly, for all the worn look of anxiety on his face. "This stranger showed up in the smoking room of the Graduates' Club last night at ten o'clock. I was there with Garry Flint. I looked up

and recognized my distinguished avuncular relative. I seized him, gave him what he deserved for coming East without notifying any of us, and this morning I brought him out, willy-nilly."

"Why, John!" cried Mrs. Fielding, still holding him by the hand. "Surely you never intended to come to New York without letting me know?"

John Hopkinson stood looking down upon his half sister with a smile in the depths of his blue eyes, and a smile hidden beneath the ends of his tawny mustache. He had a very keen recollection of his last unannounced descent upon Penfield, five years before, when Anna was having a dinner, and of the embarrassment it had seemed to cause her to find room for him at her table. But he answered with easy heartiness:

"I didn't mean to go West again, at any rate, without letting you know. I came East on less than twelve hours' notice. You haven't changed. But Stasia here has. And—"

He paused, his frank, friendly gaze upon Amy Ghent.

"Oh, Miss Ghent, you have never met my brother, Mr. Hopkinson, have

you? I had forgotten for the second that when he was here, five years ago, you and the children were at Quogue."

Amy put out a hand to meet the big one extended to her. She could not help smiling into the smiling eyes that looked down upon her. They seemed to her even bluer than Mrs. Fielding's own, but they were warm, revivifying, like the blue of kindly summer skies, not cold, piercing, like the cruel blue of icicles.

"And where are the children?" boomed the big voice of Mrs. Fielding's brother. "They will have grown out of recollection sure enough, since I haven't seen them since they were in their cradles."

"I must go and see where they are," cried Amy, poised for flight, a slim, small, graceful figure in her trim brown gingham. "They've taken to playing burglars, so they are probably in hiding somewhere."

"Hop tells me about your English friend's loss," said John, accepting his sister's suggestion that he should have some coffee. "Any clew yet?"

"Hardly—er—no." It was not the opportune time, Mrs. Fielding felt, to wave the letter of the detective agency before her son's infatuated eyes. "And Hop can't have told you of our new burglar scare, for he doesn't know it himself—unless you told, Beverly."

"I haven't had a chance to steal your thunder, Cousin Anna. I met them at the front steps, alighting from a station hack." Beverly fished out a cigarette from an enameled case, and held it mutely toward his hostess, begging her permission to smoke.

"Oh, yes, if you must." She said the words half grudgingly, half indulgently. Like all the rest of the world, she could not help somewhat spoiling Beverly Moore, with his lazy, friendly smile, his youthful, indolent manner. And then she rapidly told her son and her half brother of the preceding night's excitement.

"Looks as if there were some thieves in the neighborhood, doesn't it?" commented John. "Thieves who managed to get away with the bag the other day,

and who came back for more last night."

"But how could any one have entered the house the other day without our knowing it? And how could any one have broken in last night without leaving any mark of breaking in?" demanded Anna, frowning.

"Well," said John, "it's evident—isn't it?—that it was either some one inside the house or some one outside the house that took the bag—"

"Or that it wasn't taken at all," interrupted Stasia. "No one will have anything to do with my theory, Uncle John, which is that the noisy person who claimed to lose the bag never lost it at all, but mislaid it, and that it will turn up safely in one of her bloomin' English 'boxes' when she gets home."

"At any rate, mother," said Hopkinson, in a low tone, "last night's events seem to disprove the guilt that you had fastened on some one else a few days ago. It is, as Uncle John says, evidently the work of a prowling gang who didn't have a chance to finish their job on the day of the thunderstorm, and who were scared off again last night."

"Ah, here's your father!" cried Anna Fielding, as the dining-room door again swung open. She achieved, with the miraculous ease that practice gives, the effect of surprised happiness and instantaneous relief. It was as if she had exclaimed: "Ah, here is light and leading! Here is the illumination of our darkness, the solution of our puzzle! Here is peace for the harassed wife!" Which was a very creditable performance, considering the fact that Eustace had helplessly fled the scene when the situation was even less complicated than it was at present.

Mr. Fielding responded to the flattery of his wife's manner by advancing to kiss the hand that she extended to him before he took any note of the family group. He also allowed the slightly petulant and arraigning expression with which he had entered the room to disappear. It is one of the minor disadvantages of playing Providence—a very competent Providence—to one's family that that ungrateful

group eventually comes to blame one for the untoward visitations of fate even more than it lauds one for the friendly happenings. But Mrs. Fielding's prompt note of joy and relief had banished the faint look of annoyance and accusation from her husband's brow. At sight of John Hopkinson he brightened still more, grasping his brother-in-law's hand with warmth.

"I'm delighted to see you, my dear fellow!" he cried. "Delighted! Though you strike us in the midst of uproar, it seems. From what you telephoned me, Bev, we seem to be a storm center. Yes, Anna, I will with pleasure. The coffee they made me at daybreak in the hotel was execrable. Well, let us hear all about it. What have we lost?"

"That's the amazing thing, Eustace," replied his wife, ringing for fresh coffee. "We haven't lost anything, thanks to Miss Amy."

"Thanks to Miss Amy?" echoed the master of the house and his brother-in-law in unison. And Mr. Hopkinson went on: "That slim little thing who ran away just now?"

Mrs. Fielding glanced at him sharply even as she answered: "The same slight little thing. Oh, she didn't engage them in single combat, John, and rout them! She heard a noise, and, like a sensible woman and a faithful"—she hesitated a trifle, and then said, as though she substituted a more gracious word for the one begun—"like a faithful friend, she got up to investigate. The sound of her footsteps evidently frightened away the robber, or the robbers, without their booty."

"The plucky little thing!" cried Mr. Hopkinson warmly, and across Mrs. Fielding's well-massaged brow a tiny wrinkle ran. But she preserved her youthful appearance by a conscientious massage of the temper as well as of the skin, and she banished the frown almost at once.

"Yes, wasn't she?" she said lightly. "She came down to the dining room by the back stairs. And then she ran up the front way, and roused me—an easy thing to do, for I have been sleeping abominably since Mrs. Larrabee set her

myrmidons upon us—and I aroused the household, and we searched. The silver was in piles there." She indicated the floor in front of the sideboard. "But nothing else had been touched, as far as we can discover."

"I wonder," remarked Mr. Fielding meditatively, "if the bold burglars had never happened to read of the defeat of the double standard of currency, or if they were merely unable to reason from that to the comparative worthlessness of silver as plunder. Melted, it would be worth"—he made some calculations on the blue-embroidered doily beneath his tumbler—"oh, very much too little to compensate them for the risk and the trouble—and the loss of their souls," he added lightly.

"There's a good deal of it," said Stasia. "Enough in bulk to repay them perhaps."

"They must have had a dray in waiting," was John Hopkinson's contribution to the discourse. "They couldn't have carried it to the gates. Were there any wheel marks on the drives? Any motor-tire marks?"

"Our roads at Penfield are so admirably graveled, my dear John, that they give little evidence of traffic even in damp weather, and we've had no rain for three or four days." This from Mr. Fielding. He had disliked the graveled drives, but Anna had insisted upon them. He was mildly pleased to remind her now of their little argument and to hint a new reason in favor of earth roads.

At that moment Baum announced an influx of new visitors—the deputy sheriff, and with him a tardier arrival by the same train that had brought Mr. Fielding home—a representative of the firm of O'Brien & Shadwell. Mrs. Fielding ordered them shown into the library, and thither the household gravitated, with the exception of John Hopkinson.

"Since I know nothing of these matters, Anna," he said, "I'll take a stroll until the inquisition is over."

"While you are strolling, would you mind directing your steps toward the summer school, and sending Miss Amy

in? They will want to see her, of course—the detective and sheriff. The schoolhouse is down near the edge of the brook, behind that clump of evergreens." She pointed to a group of trees beyond the lawns and gardens at the edge of the farm lands. "The brook runs down there, though you can't see it from here," she told her brother. "It divides the fields from the grounds."

"I'll find her," answered John, with alacrity. Anna Fielding gave a little start, half frowned, then sighed, and said emphatically: "Ask her to hurry, please. Or I can send one of the servants—"

"Nonsense! I'm going in that direction. Besides, I suppose that Gimlet & Co.—what's their name?—will want to examine the servants."

He stepped through the long French window onto the terrace, and swung off down the lawn—a tall, easy, well-knit figure, with something manifestly, though indefinably, not of New York in its effect in spite of the metropolitan cut of his garments and the quality of their cloth. Anna watched him with her half frown. Then she sighed again and followed her household toward the library, where the officers of the law were waiting.

John Hopkinson, making his way toward the summer schoolhouse—a pavilion on the edge of the brook, where for six or seven months in the year the children pursued various branches of learning according to the "open-air" method—was smiling, half sadly, half amusingly, wholly good-naturedly at his thoughts. Anna had not changed, he reflected. She was the same competent, ambitious, managing person that she had always been; she still saw all her world as steps to help her toward some goal, though what goal probably she herself could not tell—another set of steps probably! How she had disliked his mother—her father's second wife—the young mountain girl, not much older than Anna herself, who had been so innately incapable of training, of formation into a product fit for the world of Anna's desires, of Anna's de-

terminations. His earliest recollections were of Anna's leaving home after some sort of a tempest which he had been too young to understand—he was fifteen years her junior—and of her occasional returns, critical, hostile, upsetting. And then she came no more; she married, and dropped all active intercourse with the dwellers in the tumble-down old house in the Shenandoah. And when his father had died she had come back in heavy mourning, and had borne with his mother and with him for the few days necessary; he had been old enough to hate her then—somberly, sullenly.

For he had hated the cramped, miserable conditions of his life, and her success, her prosperity, her achievement of her desires had embittered him toward her. His own desires seemed so impossible to achieve, and he resented her as only failure knows how to resent success. And he had resented her all the more for the magnanimity with which she forfeited any share in the tiny, encumbered holdings that their father had left; he had hated her patronage. And he had felt instinctively that Anna was generous then in order that she might pay once for all her debt to her father's relicts, in order that she might never again be obliged to consider them, in order to wipe them out of her mind without too much reproach to her conscience. Ah, well, she had not quite deserved the bitterness, the surly, unwilling acknowledgment of indebtedness that he had made her then. She was just enough, according to her lights. And since he had succeeded, he no longer resented her, hated her. Animosity had died out of his heart gradually from the day when he had begun to achieve his desires—when he had entered upon the engineering course that had once seemed so far away, so impossible.

The slatternly, untaught mother had done that for him—that for which his father, blustering, braggart, selfish, self-indulgent, had never been willing to sacrifice the smallest of his creature comforts, the smallest of his panderings to his own appetites. If that father had

lived, John Hopkinson knew that he would have grown up a discontented, untaught, mannerless boy, drifting, through sheer sense of injustice, into roughness and violence. But the man had died, and the ignorant mountain girl of whom Anna had been so hotly ashamed had given her son his chance, had given it magnificently, without understanding, without confidence in the value of her gift; had given it merely because she saw her boy craving it. She had mortgaged the little unencumbered property that remained to them in order that he might be educated. He thanked God that she had lived long enough to enable him to repay her for that gift with a comprehending gratitude. And now, since he was a man rather well off in the world's goods—very well off in the esteem of his profession—of course Anna was glad enough to claim him. She would be glad enough, he felt, with a certain grim amusement, to manage his destiny for him. Well, she was not going to be allowed to do that.

He made a detour of the great clump of evergreens, beautiful in all the variations—blue and silver, gold and black—of their wonderful color, and came upon the rough pavilion, built upon stone piles at the edge of the brook. There was a floor, reached by a few stone steps, and there was one wall and a half roof. Against the wall there was a blackboard; under the roofed-in portion of the shack there were three desks, two of them very diminutive, some globes, and a rotary stand of books. It was a charming spot in which to pursue one's early education, so John Hopkinson thought; the rough stone-and-log edifice had a beauty of its own; the inclosing hemlocks and spruces and pines drenched the air with balsamic odors; the brook, fern-fringed, brown, and placid, flowed noiselessly by; and up the slope on the other side of it the young corn was beginning to rustle its broad, bright blades. But the schoolhouse, despite its attraction, was empty.

John ventured a "Halloo!" in hope of making himself heard by the wandering teacher and her charges; but there was

no answer. An inquisitive woodpecker, hard at work on the trunk of one of the brookside trees, ceased from its labors, cocked its head toward John, and then resumed its pecking. A robin overhead sang gloriously, wooing its mate; but these sounds were the only ones in answer to his call. He stepped out of the pavilion, and went down to the brook's edge. He looked along it as far as its curves permitted, apparently hoping that school had adjourned to a canoe for the day. But there was no sight of a brown frock, no glimpse of children anywhere. He turned and walked back to the house.

He stepped to the library door to make his report to his sister. She glanced up, cried: "Ah, here they are! Miss Amy, we're waiting—Why, John, where is Miss Amy?"

"The schoolhouse was deserted, and there was no sign of her or the children anywhere," replied John.

"Not there! That's strange." Mrs. Fielding was palpably annoyed. "She might have known that this—er—this gentleman would wish to examine her personally." Mrs. Fielding indicated the representative of O'Brien & Shadwell. He was much more the detective of fact than of fiction—a rather short, thickset man, with a ruddy face and protuberant brown eyes, loose-jowled, loose-lipped, groomed and tailored in the most "regardless" manner. The deputy sheriff had already taken his departure, saying that as no loss had been sustained and no crime attempted—not even the crime of "breaking and entering"—his services were not yet needed.

"I certainly should like to see the yo' *o' lady*," remarked the detective. "I've seen enough to convince me it was an inside job—hate to spoil your confidence in your servants, ma'am," he added to Anna, who had frowned combatively. "But that's what it was, all right, all right. I don't say as any one meant to cart away the stuff. But they meant to take something else an' to leave this silver loot as though they had been outsiders, frightened away. Then when you found your diamonds

gone you'd have said: 'Sure! The burglars!' Or you'd say it about that bag full of black pearls an' all that the English party missed the other day. You've already said it about that, I'll be bound. Come, now, haven't you?" he added, with an air of ingratiating familiarity.

Mrs. Fielding replied stiffly: "Naturally we have connected the loss of Mrs. Larrabee's purse with this attempt upon our own possessions. It has seemed to some of us that a gang of robbers, or perhaps only one, was operating in the neighborhood."

"Well, you're right as far as it's bein' the same party is concerned—I'll stake a good deal on that. But it's an inside job—both of them." He spoke with much positiveness. Eustace Fielding rang a bell; he did not have to wait more than a second before it was answered; the domestic force of Penfield was gathered within the closest possible range of the library door. He gave an order that Miss Ghent should be found and summoned to the conference. And then the group sat in an uneasy silence. Stasia looked glum and unhappy; her answers to the questioning of the detective had been curt, and had shed no light upon the situation. Beverly, as usual, seemed pleased with the interesting world in which he found himself; Hopkinson Fielding looked worn and worried, older than his wont, a man at last, with his own responsibilities, his own intentions and counsels. The novelist head of the house seemed mildly irritated and bored.

Half an hour had passed, chiefly in reminiscences of "really interestin' cases" on the part of Mr. Foulke, of O'Brien & Shadwell, who claimed a wide experience, when there was the sound of quick footsteps in the hall beyond the library. Every one straightened to a look of interest and attention. The portières parted, Baum announced "Miss Ghent" much as if he had been announcing guests at a reception, and Amy entered the room.

Her big-brimmed hat of limp brown straw, wound with a scarf of blue, shaded her face; but it did not conceal

the fact that she was pale despite the healthy tan of her skin, and despite the breathlessness of hurry that her aspect held. Her brown eyes were wide, almost apprehensive; Anna Fielding noted that they sought for the slightest, most infinitesimal second the face of her brother, and that only when she had met John's immediate steady, reassuring blue gaze did she turn toward the mistress of the house and the others of the group. In her agitation, she seemed unusually young and slight, her employer marked.

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Fielding," she cried, and there was a new vibration in her voice. "They say you have wanted me for some time. I had taken the children to the glen botanizing. I wanted to get them as far as possible away from—all this. And I never thought of being wanted."

"There is no great harm done," said Mrs. Fielding. "This—er—Mr.——"

"Foulke," supplied the gentleman.

"Mr. Foulke here wished to ask you a few questions."

Amy turned her head slowly toward the detective. Hopkinson pushed forward a chair, and she sank into it. She drew her lips together, moistening them nervously. But her eyes remained steadily upon the detective's. He stared at her.

"What did you say your name was?" he blurted out after a few seconds of silent survey.

"My name is Ghent—Amy Ghent," she answered. Her voice was even. Her eyes never left his face.

"Ghent!" he cried. "Amy Ghent! Come, come! That is too good! Why, ladies and gentlemen"—he turned triumphantly toward his audience, which was looking at him with a variety of expressions, anger prevailing upon the masculine faces, bewilderment on the feminine—"why, I don't think we need go any further to have the mystery cleared up. I knew it was an inside job! Why, she hasn't even taken the trouble to change her name!"

"What the devil do you mean, sir?" Eustace Fielding barked the words out at the detective, thereby forestalling his

brother-in-law, who had moved forward menacingly, and his son, who had broken out in angry profanity.

"Mean? I mean I guess we don't need to look no further for the thief that took the Englishwoman's bag! You've got the robber right here in the house with you. This woman is a thief!"

"It's a lie! It's an outrageous, cowardly lie!" cried Eustasia Fielding, swiftly crossing the room and putting her hand on Amy Ghent's shoulder before her mother's sharp "Eustasia!" had sounded.

"You will have to be very careful what you say, sir," said Mr. Fielding, calm now, and impressive in his calm. "Miss Ghent is our friend, our trusted friend. There is some absurd mistake here, but it will be worse than an absurdity if you are not very careful of your language."

"No wonder she tried to hide when she heard there was a detective comin'," caroled Mr. Foulke. "No wonder you couldn't find her easy. No wonder she ran away—botanizin'! Botanizin'! She had a hunch that it might be one who already knew her. Why, that woman would have done time if it hadn't been that them she robbed was too tender-hearted—an' the judge one of these new-fashioned, give-'em-another-chance—"

"Be silent!" roared John Hopkinson. Then he turned to his sister. "Don't you see, Anna," he said, "that the poor child is fainting?"

Anna turned her harassed face toward the girl, huddled limp and white in the big leather chair, the long-fringed lashes closed over her dark eyes. Eustasia, with a face almost as white as Amy's own, still bent over her, murmuring words of passionate sympathy.

"Get some water, some aromatic spirits of ammonia, some salts," Mrs. Fielding commanded the servant who answered her imperious ring.

But before the order had been obeyed Amy Ghent shuddered back to consciousness. Her frightened eyes traveled around the circle of faces all

turned toward her. Finally they came to rest upon John Hopkinson's kind countenance.

"The man is telling the truth," she said slowly, never moving her tragic, dazed gaze from John Hopkinson. "That is, about the other. I—I—had nothing whatever—nothing whatever"—her voice rose in anguish—"to do with the affair here."

There was complete silence for a second. Then there seemed to come a long breath from the lips of every one in the room. John Hopkinson, for all the sudden hurt that his eyes had shown, was the first to recover speech. "It's been too much of an ordeal for her, sister," he said to Mrs. Fielding. "She doesn't know what she is saying and—"

"That's it!" cried Eustasia swiftly. "She's upset, overwrought. Last night—and now this." She ended incoherently, as far as speech was concerned, but her angry eyes were eloquent as they turned toward the detective. He shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"Have it your own way!" he said curtly. "I identify her. She sees that the jig is up, an' admits the identification. But if you want to say that she doesn't know who she is—say it, for all of me. Only it's a waste of my time an' your money for me to be here. I might as well be goin'." He stood up, as if to end the conference.

"Sit down, sit down, Mr. Foulke!" There was a nervous energy in Mr. Fielding's voice. "We have no desire to belittle your identification. I"—he looked at Amy with a puzzled pity—"I can scarcely credit what you both say; none of us can. It comes as a great shock to us. But—let us thrash the matter out. What—forgive me, Miss Amy, but it's the only thing to do—"

"Go on, please," said Amy. Her eyes were lowered now, her voice very faint. "Go on. I will tell you all the truth. But—I had nothing to do with any robbery here, or with planning any robbery."

"You'll have to prove that!" cried Mr. Foulke triumphantly. He had resumed his chair. "Once light-fingered,

always light-fingered—that's my experience. Let's see; it was eight years ago, out in Chicago. This young woman here was employed as a nursery governess in the house of a lawyer there on the North Side—well-off people. His wife—let's see." The detective ran through the tablets of his memory behind closed eyes. He opened them again brightly. "Titus was the name—George Titus. His wife had been a rich politician's daughter—I forgot her maiden name, but she came to

amended his language impudently, and Eustace Fielding had to take his brother-in-law by the arm and force him into a remote chair before the narrative could proceed peacefully.

"As I was sayin', when they'd been married five or six years, Mrs. Titus got this Amy Ghent here to come an' help with the children. An' then things began to disappear—trinkets, knick-knacks, little things. Not very valuable at first. Not easy to account for their disappearance. Just missin' when Mrs.



"I would not marry you for worlds," she told him.

her husband with a tidy little fortune of her own and considerable jewelry. She had been in Washington two or three seasons; her father had some political job there, and the Washington nobs gave her a good deal of sparklin' stuff for weddin' presents. Well, she'd been married five or six years when she got this woman here—"

He broke off. John Hopkinson had advanced a step toward him, with menace in his glance and in his closed fist.

"This young lady," suggested John Hopkinson softly.

"This young lady—this lily-white angel, for all that I care!" Mr. Foulke

Titus went to look for them. At first she couldn't say anything definite; she might have lost 'em; she might have mislaid 'em; the cleanin' people might have picked 'em up—the last person that she thought of was this here quiet young—lady!" The last word came out explosively. "Lady" was a word for which Mr. Foulke had a regard; he hated to use it indiscriminately.

"An' then one day, as it comes out in her trial, there seemed to be a chance for a big thing, an' this Ghent woman tried to pull it off, an' she failed. Mrs. Titus gave a big party—dance, dinner, I dunno what. But she had some of

the weddin'-present sparklers brought out from the safety-deposit vault, an' she wore 'em. An' the next day, when she went to pack 'em up to take back, there was a tiara gone. It was a diamond affair—there was as many first-water stones in it as there were wards in the district that had given it to her as a weddin' present from her dad's particular friends. An' it was gone. They look everywhere—can't find it. They call up headquarters. The chief orders the pawnshops searched, and searched to *find* the thing—I told you that Mrs. Titus' father was something in a political way; it wasn't one of those cases where the police was to report nothin' doin', nothin' found. It was a friend's daughter that had been robbed, an' robbed by an outsider. The chief wanted the thing cleared up. It was. The tiara was found in a pawnshop inside of two hours, an' the pawnbroker remembered the person who had brought it to him—a slim little party with dark eyes; he'd done business with her before. He was taken up to the Titus house, an' he identified her off the bat. She was clapped in jail, an' her case come along in about a month. But by that time everybody had got soft-hearted. Lawyer Titus himself made a plea for her on account of her youth an' all that; his wife didn't wish any prosecution, he said. The judge was, like I told you, one of them 'go-an'-sin-no-more' fellers. An' so she went—an' here she is, sinnin' some more!" he ended triumphantly.

"No, no!" cried Amy Ghent passionately; and "No, no!" cried Eustasia Fielding almost as passionately. Amy sat forward in her big chair, her slight figure tense, her white face alight.

"Mrs. Fielding," she prayed, "Mrs. Fielding, may I speak? You listened to him—will you listen to me?"

"Of course, Miss—Ghent," said Mrs. Fielding laboriously, wearily. "Though if you admit the truth of this man's statements—"

"There is truth in them—some truth," answered Amy; "but not all. Oh, not the whole truth! He has not told you that not one of the other things

that Mrs. Titus had—said—she lost," she hesitated, faltered, then went on more steadily: "That she said she lost were pawned by me."

"I admit," growled Mr. Foulke, "that the Chicago pawnbroker who had the tiara couldn't remember that the girl had ever pawned any of the other things Mrs. Titus had had stolen from her. But he wasn't the only pawnbroker in Chicago."

"But you had pawned other things with him?" It was John Hopkinson who spoke. His voice was kind, but its kindness made Amy shiver; it was like the kindness of the surgeon's knife.

"My own," she answered. "All my own—poor, little things! That is the truth; he will tell you it is the truth." She nodded toward the detective.

"That's all the fellow admitted havin' had from her," he carefully and somewhat sullenly qualified his agreement with her statement. "But there was other pawnbrokers in Chicago who—"

"But none of them had ever seen me. They all said it when they were brought in to look at me—you know that!" Her eyes were burning on him.

"They all said they didn't know you," admitted Mr. Foulke, with a noticeable emphasis on the "said."

"Won't you tell us what—what you want to tell us of the story, Miss Ghent?" It was again John Hopkinson who spoke. She looked at him gratefully.

"It is true that I took Mrs. Titus' tiara and pawned it," she said. "It is true. I had been living with her nearly three years—I had never taken anything of hers, or any one's, before. I didn't know I could take anything that didn't belong to me; it never occurred to me, any more than to any of you—to you, Mrs. Fielding, to you, Miss Stasia." She begged them, with her dark eyes, to believe her, to believe that a woman, a lady like themselves, spoke. Anna Fielding stared at her coldly in response. Eustasia shivered.

"I had lived with Mrs. Titus, as I tell you, almost three years. I was

twenty-one when I went to her; I had had a fairly good general education, and I had been trained as a kindergartner, as you know, Mrs. Fielding. My father had died when I was a child of seven—he was a country-town physician in Illinois. My mother was left with two children—myself and my little brother, two years younger than I. There was nothing for her to live on except a mortgaged village house and a five-thousand-dollar life-insurance policy. And she had the two of us to bring up decently and to educate. And she did it!"

There was a wealth of love, a passion of gratitude, in her voice. Her face was transfigured with the intensity of her feeling. She seemed almost to have forgotten her audience in her memories.

"She brought us to Chicago that we might have better free schooling," she went on. "She opened a boarding house to eke out an income—oh, how she used to work and work! She was a little woman—no bigger than I am. And she used to sweep and scrub and bake and twist and turn; she did all the rough work of that big house. It was a boarding house for poor people, too—poor clerks and mechanics and stenographers. And—she was good to them. Their rooms were fresh and clean; she papered them herself; she painted floors; she painted baseboards and window sashes and doors. She couldn't bear that things should not be as clean and fresh as in our own home in the country. And she gave them all good food—not fancy, but good. She used to go early to market herself. Tad and I went with her sometimes. We understood, children though we were, all that she was doing for us. We helped her with our blundering little baby hands and feet. Ah, she was good! She was so good! So kind—she was kind to those poor, hard-working people who lived under her roof. And it was because of her kindness that they told her things about themselves—the girls, the salesgirls, the poor little clerks. And—I was too young to understand it—when one of them died in

our house—died by her own hand—my mother said that I should learn to do work that would not bring me in contact with men, but with women and children. So she trained me to be a teacher, and my brother was to be a doctor, like my father. And some day we were all to go back to our village to live." She seemed to have forgotten them all as she fell silent. And they were all silent, too, for a minute. Then once more John Hopkinson broke the spell.

"But you never did?" he prompted. She started out of her vision of the past.

"We never did. My brother took tuberculosis. He had to go away—West. My mother went with him to take care of him—in lonely mountain camps, in strange, rough places. And I—I had had my training then—I stayed in Chicago to work, to send them money. And when I had a chance to go to Mrs. Titus for her children it seemed better than to go on with the public kindergartening because it would mean that all my expenses were paid. All that I earned I could send to them. Well, so I did—except what I needed for the barest necessities of clothing. All that I made. But—unfortunately Mrs. Titus was always in my debt. She was always weeks—weeks"—her voice rose in the shrillness of nervous tension—"behind with my salary. It used almost to madden me sometimes when there were things needed so badly, so quickly out West. But I was sure of getting it some time, and I had no expenses of my own, as I tell you. So I kept on with her; I liked her, anyway, and the children were dear little things. And that is how I came to pawn some of my own things—when she couldn't give me any money, and I simply had to send a little out to mother and Tad."

They were all watching her intently, but she seemed unconscious of their scrutiny, absorbed in the recollections her story had aroused in her. Her small, pale, large-eyed face was lighted from within by an emotion that dominated even the shame and fright and resentment of the present.

"She owed me three months' salary when she gave the dinner dance this man has told you of. And the morning of that day I had an urgent letter from my mother. The doctor had said that Tad must be moved; there was some trouble with his heart in the very high altitude, and he had to go to a lower one. I had been told of it before, and I had begged Mrs. Titus for the money almost on my knees. But the letter that morning was very urgent. Mother said the change had to be made at once if ever. I went to her and told her—Mrs. Titus. She was annoyed with me for bothering her on such a busy day at first; but she was really kind-hearted, and after a little she was sympathetic. But she said she simply didn't have the money; she would try to get it. I said that I must speak to Mr. Titus; my need was so great. And then at first she was angry, and afterward frightened. She had a good allowance for everything, and he never dreamed how far she exceeded it; she begged me not to let him know. He was a careful, methodical man, and he would have been very angry. She had promised him amendment before, and he believed now that she was even with her expenses, and she was far behind. She cried, and said she didn't see how I could make such a disturbance on a day when she was so busy and under such a nervous strain. And finally she made me promise I would not speak to her husband; and she promised that she would manage to get me the money by the next morning. Well, she didn't! And I don't know how I came to think it was easier and better to take her diamonds and to pawn them than to tell Mr. Titus; I suppose I realized, though I truly did not think of it, that if I told him I should have to get another position. She would never have kept me. So I did"—her voice fell, the color swept over her pale face—"I did what this detective has told you. I snatched that thing from Mrs. Titus' dressing table and pawned it. He didn't tell you that I pawned it for only a hundred dollars—she owed me that—and that it

was worth two or three thousand. I meant to tell her. I truly meant to tell her. I knew she would forgive that—my stealing—sooner than telling her husband. But—I was prevented by one thing and another; and it was Mr. Titus who was going to take the things to the vault, and he missed the tiara—and everything was as the man here tells you. But"—she raised her head, and her eyes leaped with light and defiance—"I am glad I did it, though I could never be brave and fearless enough to do it again. For my brother lived."

There was a moment's silence, and then Mr. Fielding found himself saying, with a society manner that surprised him very much as he recognized it: "Thank you, Miss Amy," as if she had rendered him a favorite selection on the piano.

"That's all very pretty," snarled Mr. Foulke, of O'Brien & Shadwell; "but there's still a little somethin' that needs explainin', an' that's what has become of the Englishwoman's bag? I never see a criminal yet that can't make up a pretty story; they ought to be the writers, them! But all I know is that you've got a thief in the house, an' that things has been disappearin'. What have you got to say about it?"

They had a great deal to say about it, and they all tried to say it at once. Hopkinson Fielding, full of pity for Miss Ghent, was nevertheless chiefly concerned to make his mother admit that her original suspicions in regard to Clarice Tenney were proved baseless; Eustasia was fervently for believing in everybody except a hypothetical band of strolling marauders; Beverly was apparently veering toward her view from that of the detective. Mrs. Fielding and her husband were sharply divided in their opinion of the tale they had just heard. And John Hopkinson said nothing.

"Perhaps you would like to search my trunk and my room?" suggested Amy when a lull had come.

"Oh, she's disposed of the loot by this time," ejaculated Mr. Foulke, wise in the ways of criminals.

"I have not been away from Penfield for a week," said Amy, silencing a chivalrous chorus of masculine protest.

"But you've had lots of opportunity for botanizin'. Botanizin'!" cried the detective explosively. That word had somehow rankled.

"Perhaps it would be as well—" said Mrs. Fielding half apologetically.

"Nothing in my room is locked," said Amy simply.

"Oh, I think this is an outrage!" cried Eustasia furiously. "Think! It's Miss Amy—*Miss Amy*—whom you're treating like this!"

"My dear," said her mother majestically, "it is as a vindication of Miss Amy, and at her request, that we do it. Of course," she added, "no one here will say a word of what has happened before the servants."

Amy smiled a little whitely. She knew the subtle and incorporeal agencies for the dissemination of rumors, of information, among the servants of a household. But she accepted Mrs. Fielding's remark at its surface value. The search was made. Of course—"of course!"—cried Mr. Foulke, with underlining of the words, nothing was found. The little inquisitorial party dissolved into component parts again. Mr. Foulke retired, rebuffed, to New York. Mr. and Mrs. Fielding sought sanctuary in their apartments. The children were confided to Hannah's care for the moment—a significant fact that Amy Ghent did not fail to note. Stasia and Beverly Moore departed for one of their tramps. Hopkinson went back to town. But his uncle, John Hopkinson, declined to accompany him.

"There is something I want to do out here," he said. "I'll be in to-night, maybe. Almost certainly. I'll meet you at the Graduates' at seven."

"Are you going to try your hand at a little amateur-detective work?" asked Hopkinson, smiling slightly.

"No; I'll leave Mr. Foulke his own field. It's something else—something quite different."

"All right. I'll see you to-night."

Hopkinson, tired, worried, left his half uncle, and that gentleman, dependent on his own devices, took his way toward the schoolhouse by the brook, where he had failed to find Amy that morning.

He felt quite sure that she would come thither by and by. He felt that she would feel herself alien, alone, in the house, where all doors were closed to her, and where, behind them, she would know herself discussed. She would seek her own place by and by—the little spot with no associations save of happy work and happy, childish affection. But he did not foresee exactly what would happen to her before she came.

She had moved restlessly about the house for a few minutes. Her own room no longer seemed her own; strangers had been there, distrustful of her, veiling their distrust under polite words such as "vindication," or openly and hostilely expressing it. She caught the new, half-impertinent, half sympathetic gleam in the servants' eyes. Exclude them from the conference? Hide from them the conversation? As well speak of excluding them from the air that circulated through the Penfield halls, from the sunlight that streamed through the windows.

By and by she took her resolution. She went to the door of Mrs. Fielding's boudoir. She rapped. The murmur of voices within died away. There was a second's pause. Then "Come in!" called Anna Fielding's voice.

Amy entered. Mr. and Mrs. Fielding looked at her strangely. Mr. Fielding rose to draw a chair for her. His wife murmured something unintelligible.

"Mrs. Fielding," began Amy bravely, "I have come to say that I think I had better leave your employ."

The faces of her auditors brightened. Their vague embarrassment passed. Warmth, cordiality reappeared upon their countenances.

"Of course it will be almost impossible to keep some knowledge of—er—the revelations of the past hour from the children," said Anna Fielding.

"And that, of course, would make it practically impossible for you to continue with them as governess. It would imperil your authority—imperil your authority," she repeated, clinging to the words as to a life-saver.

"That is my opinion also," said Amy. "Of course, I realize that you—you may not be satisfied about my lack of connection with this affair here—" She raised appealing eyes to them. Eustace Fielding hastened, with many words, to assure her of his belief in her innocence. Anna sat with perturbed and perplexed face.

"I don't know what to think," she said despairingly.

"If—if you think—you ought to dismiss me—" faltered Amy, appealing to Anna's cold, vexed eyes. But Anna's husband took the conduct of the interview from his wife.

"My dear Miss Amy," he said kindly, "neither Mrs. Fielding nor I believe for a moment that you have any connection with these annoying and puzzling matters here. Mrs. Fielding says that she doesn't know what to think—and she doesn't. But she knows one thing not to think—and that is that you are concerned in the loss of Mrs. Larrabee's bag, which is, after all, the only thing lost. I am sure I speak for both of us—Anna?"—he raised his eyes inquiringly toward his wife, and she said "Yes, indeed!" and he went on—"when I say that we were moved deeply by your story of your early life and of your—unfortunate—experience in Chicago. That was not theft. It was the impulse of hysterical fright—of a most natural, I might almost say a most commendable, hysterical fright," he repeated. "It no more brands you a—a person of careless standards of honesty than any other instinctive act of self-protection would have so branded you. But—all the world are not psychologists, Miss Amy." The psychological novelist smiled.

Amy's bright, tired eyes never left his face. She nodded now. "I know," she said. "And, least of all, little children. But"—her lips quivered—"thank you—for believing—" She stopped

to keep back a sob. Then she turned toward Anna.

"As soon, then, as it is convenient to you, Mrs. Fielding—"

"I don't want to hurry you," said Anna crisply. "But when a disagreeable thing is to be done the sooner it is over the better. That has always been my theory and my practice. I shall give you, of course, a month's salary in lieu of warning—"

"But it is I who am leaving you, Mrs. Fielding," interrupted Amy, with gentle insistence. "At least, I had hoped you would allow it to be that way—that you would let me leave you, perhaps refer to you—"

"Certainly it shall be that way," Eustace assured the young woman. "Mrs. Fielding only meant that—we can't let you go from us on such short notice entirely unprovided—" He floundered for a second. "Hang it all, Miss Amy, we feel that if we were persons of principle, strong enough to act upon belief instead of convention, we should not let you leave us—"

"Really, Eustace!" protested his wife. "It is because I don't want the children—"

"Never mind, please, either of you—both of you," begged Amy. "Only let me know. You would like me to leave at once, Mrs. Fielding?"

"As soon as you can make satisfactory arrangements," said Anna firmly. She looked defiantly at her husband—the man, complicating a clear issue by his absurd chivalry and sentimentalism.

"To-morrow?" Amy could not keep her tone from faltering.

"You are not to inconvenience yourself, of course," said Mrs. Fielding coldly.

"To-morrow, then," said Amy. And it was from that interview that she fled to the little cabin on the edge of the brook.

John Hopkinson had not waited there, but had dallied about the neighborhood, scanning the evergreens with an eye accustomed to timbers, turning over the brookside sands with the end of a little stick he had whittled, watching the minnows at play in the water.

He had all the outward aspect of an idle and tranquil gentleman upon a summer's day.

Amy did not see him as she sped to her retreat to indulge herself in the luxury of a breakdown at last. She pretended to herself that she had come to clear her desk of any personal belongings that might have found their way there. But she had no sooner raised the lid of it than she began to cry—slow, silent tears that hurt her eyes and stung her cheeks with salt and choked the throat that would not let the sobs come. At first. By and by the sobs came, and the anguished, strangled sound of them reached the brook-side. John Hopkinson sprang to his feet, and came noisily back to the schoolhouse. The girl tried to control herself as he appeared, heralded by many conscientious sounds. But her strained, desperate face, her labored breathing, would have told the story of her misery even to one who had not overheard the sobbing.

"Mr. Hopkinson!" she faltered.

"Yes, Miss Ghent. I've been down here waiting for you ever since Mr. Foulke's party was over. I hope you won't think me intrusive?"

"I—I—am not fit for—strangers—any one—to see."

"Of course you're upset, unstrung. But I don't want you to think of me as a stranger. I want you to think of me as a friend."

"I—thank you. You are very good."

"You don't sound so awfully appreciative," smiled John. "You sound as if you thought me the original Mr. Butter-in. But—"

"No, I don't. I feel you are good and kind."

"Not exactly that. But no matter about me. We aren't here to discuss my qualities—yet. The question is: What are you planning to do?"

Amy's eyes filled again with tears.

"I don't quite know," she told him. "I—I am leaving here to-morrow. Mrs. Fielding—she didn't dismiss me. But, of course, she doesn't want me. I—I don't know whether she will feel it right

to give me a reference. Anyway, I am to go to-morrow."

John sat in one of the children's little chairs, crowded in behind a small desk. He looked at her earnestly.

"Do you know why I waited for you here?" he asked her. His voice stirred her strangely. She looked at him with an irrepressible thrill of excitement. Then she shook her head, not breaking the tense moment by speech.

"When you went away from the breakfast table this morning," he said, quite slowly and deliberately, never moving his blue eyes from her face, "my heart said that there was the woman I wanted to see always at my own breakfast table. I—I thought I must wait for ever and ever so long before I could tell you so. But—today has made a difference—to me; not to you. I know you now. You revealed yourself in the white light of a dreadful trial. I am still unknown to you. But—" He broke off, embarrassed at his own earnestness, his own emotion. He covered it with a half laugh. "Is there a chance for me?" he asked. "Or—I'm rather stupid about this sort of thing. I have never gotten my hand in. But—if there's no one else?"

The girl had watched him with an intentness that seemed on the verge of excited speech throughout his proposal. But now that he was silent she did not rush into the pause with words. She watched him still, with an expression in her dark eyes that he could not fathom. And when she spoke, it was to say:

"I think I am looking at the kindest man that ever lived. But—oh, how could you think I would do it? How could you think I would? No, no, no! A hundred times no!" The pallor had left her face. She was flushed with the energy of her rejection.

"Some one else?" asked John Hopkinson quietly.

"No—of course there's no one else." She was impatient with his stupidity.

"Don't know me well enough?" he suggested then. The color darkened in



"But—I can't let you go like this! I never dreamed—that is—oh, Stasia, what I have lost!"

her cheeks; the light in her eyes deepened.

"I know you well enough," she assured him briefly.

"Then what is it? Or doesn't knowing me mean—caring?"

She did not answer, only continued to look at him with an expression that a man more versed in the eyes of women would have read as sheer dog-like adoration. But she compressed her lips firmly, and finally she answered him seriously.

"I would not marry you for worlds," she told him. "Of course, it is all a wild notion, a crazy dream. We don't know each other, for all that we have claimed to. But—you are big-hearted. You don't like to see a woman baited, hounded. You can't see any way to stop it except by taking the right—the conventional right—to protect her. Maybe there isn't any other way. May-

be this will happen to me again and again—to find my work, and make my little niche in the world, and to go on happily, half forgetting for a while, only to have it all overthrown—my peace and security—by that—dreadful Chicago story. Perhaps never, unless I could bring myself to marry, shall I be free of the danger of being ousted from my position by some recognition. But I am not going to marry to escape the danger. Once—for an insane twenty-four hours—I was a thief. I am not a thief now. I never was, but for that mad, frightened day. But if I have to pay the penalty of that day all the rest of my life, all right—I'll pay it. I tell you, I'll pay it gladly! My brother is alive. And—do you see? Since I got my good thing that I wanted so desperately, I am not going to shirk paying the price. I am not going to shirk it by marrying the best, the

kindest"—her firm, vibrant voice broke. There was a rush of bright tears to her eyes. She winked them away, and laughed a broken, sweet laugh—"man in the world," she finished breathlessly. "The man tender enough to want to marry me! Maybe," she ended whimsically, "I might have married one not tender enough to ask me."

John looked at her with a smile.

"You and I are going to be very happy together," he told her. "But—don't get into battle array!" For the smile had faded from her lips, and a light of determination and defiance began to gleam in her eyes. "Don't get your dander up, as we say in some parts of the world—not Sister Anna's part. I'm not going to try to make you do anything until you are ready to. Only you'll let me see you sometimes—write to you? You'll answer my letters?"

She drew a long breath through her parted lips. Her eyes shone.

"Yes!" She thrilled as she spoke the word. The fields and woods seemed to echo with it; months and years to come were big with its meaning.

"Then that's all right," said John comfortably.

They went back to the house separately. Amy had sent him on ahead. As she followed slowly after, she stood still once on the sloping green lawn, and laughed aloud to the sky.

"What," she demanded of the firmament, "*what* would poor Mrs. Fielding say?" Then she added, subdued and almost awed:

"Fancy my feeling like this to-day! *To-day!* When I was so miserable, so undone! Ah, the dear, blessed kindness of him!"

CHAPTER VI.

It was a rather momentous interview for which Mr. Beverly Moore came from Richmond the next April. He had written to his Second Cousin Anna's daughter Eustasia, and not to Mrs. Fielding herself. He had asked the girl to meet him in town.

"Perhaps it would be better," he had

suggested, "if you did not mention to Cousin Anna my intention to appear. I may not be able to get out to Penfield; it is very unlikely that I shall be able to this trip. And I want particularly to see you—as I always do, dear Cousin Princess. More than usual, in fact. I have something to tell you which I hope you will approve, and which I half hope you will disapprove. Let me know when and where on Thursday to find you." And then there was the little involved monogram that he used in signing his letters to her—the monogram that stood for half a dozen words, and was made with such an easy two or three strokes.

Eustasia, through some instinct that put her on the defensive, had appointed the Women's University Club as the meeting place, and the hour four o'clock. She knew that her cousin hated the somewhat chilly formality of the parlors there, and she resolved not to admit him to the cozy intimacy of the tea room—unless she felt like it. Beverly was in need of some disciplining.

Nevertheless, the prospect of the interview lent a warmth and luster to her appearance that had been somewhat lacking during the winter. And she dressed herself with great care and sumptuousness. Her dark, fiery beauty was the sort that accorded well with furs and velvet, with royal color and magnificent fabric. The April day was chilly and rainy, with the effect of November rather than of spring.

On the way into town she had striven to keep her thoughts away from the coming interview. But her courage failed her; her mind was rebellious to her will. It leaped forward at the urging of her tremulous, uncertain, dreading heart to the coming talk. She felt suddenly sure that Beverly was going to tell her the thing that she had feared, the thing whose possibility she had put from her for several years. And at the conviction she was cold through all her healthy body. She tried to read; she consulted her tablets, with the jottings of errands to be done, of engagements to be kept. But she could not keep her-

self from foreknowing the purport of that interview which he, the indolent, had come from Richmond to seek.

"Oh!" she cried impatiently to herself behind clenched teeth. "Oh, what a fool I am! Haven't I had premonitions of this a hundred times? And has it ever come? No! He probably merely wants something from me."

But her stalwart insistence upon the folly of her fears brought no reassurance to her. All that she was finally capable of was a proud determination to show no feeling, no broken heart, at whatever he might have to tell her.

He was waiting for her in the long, formal, stately, chilly parlor. The room was deserted except for him, standing before the wood fire beneath the white marble mantelpiece and eagerly watching the hall. His amiable, indifferent face brightened at sight of her. Her own heart gave a great bound of relief. Surely—surely if he had bad news for her—news of that impending which would sunder them, break the old, dear relation of years—he could not look so utterly himself—so contented, so pleased. Surely his unlined forehead would be seamed by the hours of struggle, the hours of debate as to how he should tell her. She knew that just this little trip in from Penfield had scarred her face with fear.

"Ah, here you are at last! Stasia, dear, how well you look! How—magnificent! I have always said," he added judicially, "that no one in the world knows how to wear furs as you do."

"Thank you kindly," said Stasia, laughing and glowing. "You look quite fit yourself."

"But why, dearest cousin, did you appoint this extremely respectable tomb for a rendezvous? Can't we go somewhere else? A noisy tea room? The Colony Club—it's less—er—highbrow—oppressive—I don't know what."

"Oh, every place is gloomy on such a day. Let us stay here. It will be quiet. And you have something to tell me." She spoke incisively. She had the warrior spirit; she would advance upon danger, not lie trying to hide until it fell upon her.

"Just as you say," answered Beverly to her decision to remain where they were. "Just as you say, of course. Though I should just as lief open my heart to you under the stern eye of Justice in the marble building devoted to that lady down the street."

"Ah, then it is your heart!" said Eustasia, with an admirable lightness. She moved toward the red velvet davenport at the end of the room. She seated herself upon it, indicating a chair in front of it and on the other side of the tea table for his occupancy. She realized, with a thrill of gratitude, that her arrangement had left her own face in the shadow, while exposing his to all the light the day afforded. "There'll be tea in a few minutes," she said.

He dropped into the chair and looked at her—looked at her with a deliberate, admiring appraisal, as one looks long and lovingly at the trinket that one is rejecting as too dear or inappropriate for one's use despite its beauty. The quotation that fell from his lips intensified the meaning of the look:

"Farewell! Thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou knowst thine estimate!"

Stasia looked brightly toward the door, and nodded to a damp lady poking a mackintoshed pair of shoulders into the room.

"Ah, here it comes!" she cried, with accents of relief, as the maid came in with a tea tray. A rosy candle was lighted on the little table. Stasia's white hands moved deftly among the tea things, all her thoughts apparently intent upon her pretty task.

"Well," she said, in the leisure following her first sip of the delicately fragrant amber fluid, "go on with your story. Skipping the poetry parts," she added, with the humorous air the words demanded.

But Beverly continued to look at her with eyes of sad and fully understanding renunciation.

"There's no one like you in the world, Stasia," he told her. "No one! And

there never has been anything so perfect as our friendship, has there?"

In spite of herself, Stasia shivered. If he was going to prolong the agony, it was more than she could bear.

"Skipping the poetry parts, please," she reminded him.

"Well, then, skipping the poetry parts," he answered, "I've come to you because I wanted you to hear it from me first—that of course. And I wanted you to hear it before any one else knew—"

"You're engaged!" The words sounded stark, bald. He nodded. She said no more for a second. Her wide, dark eyes, fixed upon him, were not withdrawn; the expression of her beautiful face did not alter. But second by second the blood receded from it until it was a marble-white mask, with two cavernous, dark eyes in its midst.

"Who is the girl?"

"Vieva Hartridge," he answered, in a low tone. The tension seemed to relax slightly. She sank back.

"Vieva Hartridge! But—but she—she's a child!"

"She is young. She is nineteen, though—not quite a child. She came out last winter."

"Ah!" She made an effort to gather her forces. "I saw her only that one summer at Quogue—she was a child then. And I hadn't realized how time was flying. That was five years ago; of course she would be out now." She bit her dry lips to moisten them, nodded absently toward another damp figure that entered the room and moved in the direction of the flaming hearth fire. "And—you are very, very happy? I am sure I hope you are." She tried to speak with light formality, but her manner was false.

"Stasia," he cried, with his air of seeming earnest, "Stasia, my dear girl, my dearest friend! What sort of chaff are you putting me off with? There has always been truth between us, hasn't there? And there always shall be truth between us. I—of course I'm not happy. Not altogether happy. I'm fond of the child; that goes without saying. I mean to make her as happy

as I can. I—this is something I should not say, but I may say anything to you, may I not? I must tell you everything. The child made her feeling for me plain."

"And you are marrying her to spare her feelings?" asked Stasia ironically. "A bad precedent, my dear boy. You may find yourself a bigamist at any moment, with such an obliging disposition. The Hartridges are very rich, aren't they?" That was in another tone.

"They are," replied Beverly concisely. "And there, of course, you get at the gist of the matter. You know how fearfully in debt I am—who should know it better than you, who have so often divinely helped me? You know that I must have money—lots of it—for my release. You know I have to marry it. Now, I'm not a cad—"

"No?" said Stasia, watching him with gathering bitterness in her eyes.

"No!" he repeated sharply. "I would not marry a woman I had no feeling for though she had the wealth of Ormus and of Ind. I wouldn't marry a woman I couldn't be fond of—one who couldn't be genuinely fond of me. But—ah, Stasia, why do you make it hard for me? You and I have never been in love with each other, have never planned a common life together. But as soon as I was pledged to another woman I realized what a gigantic thing in my life our relation, our friendship, was. I realized how I shall hate the man who claims you, who takes from me—not the love I had, for I never had your love"—he was quite determined about it—"but your affection, your thoughts, your comradeship. I shall be infernally jealous of him, though I freely admit that I shall have not the shadow of a right to be. And—I expected you would be a little resentful, on your side, of Vieva. Though, of course, our relation—our intimacy—hasn't meant to you what it has to me."

"How easily you sweep it all aside! How deftly you label it and pigeonhole it—our friendship!" The fierce, untamed woman that one always felt beneath her breeding sprang at him, un-

leashed. But her voice was lower than ever, for all its fury. "Our friendship! You know that since I was a child of fifteen you have had the best part of me. There hasn't been a day since I was a woman grown that I have not known I loved you—that I have not believed you loved me. Some day, I told myself, you would wake, as I had waked, into a knowledge of what we meant by that cousinly intimacy—those cousinly half caresses! Don't forget them!"

"I shall never forget them as long as I live," he interrupted her, with the manner of repressed passion. It arrested her in the tide of her anger, of her reproach. She looked at him out of stricken eyes—eyes that besought some kindly explanation of most unkindly fact. After the manner of a loving woman, she yearned to believe some good of the hand that struck her.

Beverly saw his momentary advantage, and pursued it.

"I shall never forget one incident of all the days we have spent together, not one look of your dear, beautiful face. If I had known, if I had dreamed—but what's the use? Even if we had both realized what our cousinly comradeship had meant before it was too late, you know that it could have come to nothing. Cousin Anna, Cousin Eustace—they have designed you for something much better than the wife of an impeachable Southern lawyer in a half-awake Southern town. They would never have consented. It was not even as if I were ambitious, able; I'm not. I'm indolent to the core; they know it, you know it, I know it. I had nothing to offer you—the beautiful daughter of the house of Fielding. I'm carrying about a horrid burden of debt—as you, poor, generous darling, realize only too well. I tell you, Stasia," his voice rang even more sincerely, "that one thought—a base thought, if you please to call it so—that weighed with me when I saw Vieva—well, that I had a chance with Vieva—was that I could pay you the wretched money I owe you." He looked at her directly, appealingly, with the air of one who wins pardon for

mistakes by simple honesty on his pleasant, indeterminately featured face.

"And so," ruminated Stasia slowly, all the fight gone out of her voice, and only a vast weariness left, "the very thing I did to bind you everlasting to me is one of the things that helps to part us!" She looked absently toward a party talking gayly at the opposite end of the long room. Then she turned toward Beverly again, a little smile on her pale lips. "You see, I used to feel toward you somewhat like a foolish mother toward her boy—I wanted you to have everything on earth you wanted, and I wanted you to have it all from me. I thought, in my stupidity, that you must adore me for it sooner or later. As I suppose churchmen reason that we must all love God passionately for all that He has given us. You will never know how glad I was, what a secret song sang in my heart, that first time you opened up your worries to me; or what a wave of gratitude rolled over me that I was my own mistress financially, that I controlled Grandfather Fielding's little legacy. I was almost afraid to mention it to you—that I could help you—that I should love to help you. But I got my courage up, and you took it all—so sweetly, so simply it seemed to me then. You understood; you were willing to do it; we were such chums, like two men, you said. But I knew the kiss you gave my fingers you would not have given to the man comrade's hand, no matter how generous. And the knowledge was like wine in my veins. How furious Mr. Talty was when I insisted upon selling that stock on a downward market, as if I cared so long as it gave you what you needed! Ah, well!"

"Stasia, you are torturing me!" he said, in a low tone.

"I think I should like to torture you a little," she answered. "But—it's no use. You can't be tortured—not really. God gave you a shield for your heart when He made you—you don't really feel. Well, I'm through with making you a scene. I'm rather surprised at myself. I had always been instructed that it was the sort of thing one didn't

do if one was a proper young lady. But I was never very proper, and now I am not very young." She laughed and rose. "I've got to get back early," she added. "Mother has a dinner on to-night, and she thinks she needs me."

"But—I can't let you go like this! I never dreamed—that is—oh, Stasia, what I have lost!"

"Nothing so much," said Stasia, under good control now. "I probably exaggerated everything, including my devotion, under the momentary whip of jealousy. Try to forget it. When shall I write to your Vieva?"

"Whenever you will. I told her I should let you know at once. I told her—that we were like dear brother and sister. She—she is prepared to adore you." Eustasia smiled skeptically, but said nothing. "And—and," he continued, with an honest red of embarrassment on his cheek, "as soon as—the marriage settlements are made—it's all to be very comfortably and decently arranged—I can pay you back what you've lent me these last eight or nine years. Except that no money on earth can repay it."

"Oh, that!" Eustasia dismissed the matter with a shrug. "But when are you to be married?" Her eyes seemed to shrink from the knowledge her lips demanded.

"In June," he answered, in a low voice, his eyes averted.

"June weddings are pretty," she said lightly. "Southern ones especially. Well, good-by. My taxi's waiting; I don't believe I'll offer to put you down anywhere. I—I want to be by myself for a little while."

"Oh, my poor love!" he breathed almost inaudibly, although his look interpreted the murmur to her ears. His eyes dwelt upon her longingly, sadly, with the gaze of high renunciation. When she had left the room he stood for a moment by the long parlor windows; he watched her spring into her cab. Not until it had started up Madison Avenue did he permit himself to wipe his damp forehead and to breathe a long sigh of relief.

"Gad!" he cried absently, but fer-

vently, to the surprise of the white-capped young person removing the tea things as he moved to the hall. "Gad! But I came out of that better than I dared hope. Poor old Stasia!"

CHAPTER VII.

Stasia had been the most brilliant of the guests at Vieva Hartridge's wedding. The Fielding family had attended the festivity at Roseacres, the Hartridges' summer place in the Blue Ridge Mountains, with a cordiality they would probably not have displayed had Beverly married less advantageously. Anna Fielding, after her first maternal fear that perhaps Stasia might feel her intimate cousin's defection to the rank of benedicts, had been whole-heartedly glad of the affair.

"Of course, the Hartridges are nobody—nobody at all, except for their West Virginia oil mines, which they had the good sense to sell while the oil was still gushing," she confided to her husband. "But Beverly can supply family. And he needs the money, Heaven knows! He's incorrigibly lazy; I used to think him able, but I doubt it now. However, one forgives it in him as one forgives so many things, because of his charm. And, thank Heaven, I need never worry again about Stasia's interest in him, and reproach myself for having admitted him to our house on the insecure family-connection basis. She seemed bubbling with delight and interest when it was announced."

"I always told you your forebodings were wide of the mark," answered Eustace indolently. "A mere bubbling interest at the time proved nothing, of course; haven't you ever noticed how my heroines affect that gayety to conceal et cetera, et cetera? But her enthusiasm remained sustained. And, besides, there was never anything in it—as I told you."

"I know you did," agreed Anna admiringly. "You can't think how glad I am you were proved right. Well, we'll all go—all of us grown-ups, at any rate, and give the seal of family sanc-

tion to the affair." Thus Mrs. Fielding cleverly turned into a favor to her cousin her desire to shine at a conspicuous wedding.

They had gone, except Hopkinson, who had been a little curt in resisting his mother's importunities. Had she not sturdily refused to give her consent, her welcome, to Clarice Derwent, even after the affair of the Penfield silver had practically exonerated her from the wild suspicion of having taken Mrs. Larrabee's bag? And had not Clarice—dear, proud, obstinate girl!—refused to be his wife except on his mother's invitation? He was not interested in other men's marriages—especially in Beverly Moore's. He had never cared for Beverly Moore; his mother knew that. He was rather peevish about the whole affair. And they had finally left him, and had journeyed to Virginia in a private car that the Hartridges had placed at the disposal of some intimate New York guests. And the wedding had been charming, the bride quite pretty in her delicate, sunny youthfulness. And Stasia had been a starry, regal figure, surrounded by satellites, glittering among them; and she had caused Vieva to murmur to her lover the day before the wedding: "How did you ever fall in love with me, poor little me, when you knew her?" And Beverly had made the customary response to the not uncommon query; and had added the detail of his cousinship with Stasia. And all had been very well indeed.

But back at Penfield some of the restless brilliancy that had characterized Stasia for two months disappeared. To her mother's anxieties, she had admitted a prosaic indigestion—too gay a winter, she said; too elaborate a wedding breakfast. She would feel better when they went to Bar Harbor. Meantime she seemed to grow worse, paler, more languid, more irritated with the courteous necessities of living in a pleasant neighborhood, where there was much interchange of social amenities. Anna began to question the correctness of her first jubilant impression concerning Stasia's attitude toward her cousin's

marriage. She felt that she would be glad when they got away to Bar Harbor and had a chance to note the tonic effect of the northern sea air on the girl. But they had taken the Waldo cottage for only July and August—"And goodness knows it was hard enough to do that!" Anna reflected, viewing the stub in her check book that represented the holding price of the Waldos' residence. And she wished a little more impatiently than usual that Eustace would some day write a book whose sales would really make an impression on their exchequer.

June dragged on. Hopkinson departed hastily for the western part of the State one day, and the information percolated through the household that Clarice Derwent's father had been pardoned out of prison to die; that, more obliging and more honest than some others in that respect, he had actually fulfilled his part of the contract two weeks after his release; and that Hopkinson had hurried off to be with Clarice in her trial, perhaps at last to persuade her to wait no longer for the impossible, but to marry him at once.

"Just when her father's release and death would give the whole wretched affair an extra paragraph of newspaper notoriety," sighed Anna, thin-lipped and angry at the prospect. She and Stasia were on the terrace together, pictures of prosperous summer tranquillity behind the laurel tubs on the stone balustrade. But it occurred to Anna, aware of her own ire, that her emotions were not in as perfect control as they had been a while ago. Sometimes the wraiths of her anxieties even crowded about her bedside and forbade her to sleep—a thing that had never happened to her before. Her delicate skin, her bright eyes were bearing the telltale marks of her harassment.

"Why can't you give in, mother?" asked Stasia wearily. "Let them be happy—poor things—if they think they can be. Of course, you know that you've made the little actress person more to be desired than gold to Hop. It was the way to fight her battle for her. But what's the use? She seemed

all right enough. And as for her father—the Derwent man—why, there's so much high-class embezzlement these days, so many perfectly delightful embezzlers, that I don't see how he matters. As for the world's opinion—you're old-fashioned. The world doesn't give a snap of its manicured fingers for anything that doesn't concern its own comfort and amusement. It cares for nothing, remembers nothing. Nobody remembers anything. Why don't you give in?"

"The really serious aspect of the case does not seem to strike you," replied her mother, with a sort of angry dryness.

"I think it does. It seems to me a serious thing to keep two poor things apart who fancy they want to be together."

"Even admitting that the affair of the purse was cleared up—which I don't admit—the girl's father is a thief. There is dishonest blood in her veins. I do not care to see that strain transmitted to my grandchildren." Mrs. Fielding spoke rather rotundly, as one who recites the law and the prophets and feels the security of her argument. But Stasia laughed bitterly.

"Oh, I dare say if you're going to be such a stickler for heredity there are enough dishonest Fieldings, dishonest Hopkinsons, to make doubtful your grandchildren's—"

"Stasia!" cried her mother sharply. "I don't permit that loose kind of talking. The Fielding strain, the Hopkinson strain—" She remembered her father, shady trickster in business, boaster in society, and she hesitated for a second; then she went on firmly, denying the memory that had given her pause: "The Fielding and the Hopkinson strains are pure of that taint, at least," she finished.

"I wonder!" laughed Stasia unpleasantly, moving off the wide terrace and losing herself in the shrubbery beyond the house. She had wandered down to the brook, and was looking into the schoolroom, where Bob and Linda pursued all knowledge under the guidance of a new governess, when a servant

came hurrying after her. Her mother wished to speak to her, he said.

She hurried back to the house. Anna Fielding still sat where Stasia had left her, but a mid-morning mail was on the green wicker table before her. The girl saw it from afar—the leather bag fallen on the tiled floor. She marked the grace of the slender, erect, white-gowned figure, clear cut against the bright-red cushions of the piazza chair.

"She has had word that they have done it—gotten married," she thought to herself as she hurried over the lawn. There was a curious constriction at her heart. She sighed. She hoped they would be happy, poor Hop and the girl he loved. But she distrusted the universe; there was no happiness in it.

"Well, mother, dear?"

Anna held a letter speechlessly toward her. She took it, smiling.

"Have they gone and sold you, mother?" she asked. "Didn't she keep on being adamant—Hop's nice Clарice?"

"Read it!" said Anna tersely. And Stasia, opening the sheet, cried: "Why, it's from Colorado, from Uncle John!"

"Read it!" said her mother again, more impatiently. And Stasia read. She read how her Uncle John had wooed Miss Ghent on the morning of the disclosures concerning her past. "Oh, what an old brick!" she cried, with enthusiasm. She read how Amy Ghent had refused him, preferring a more orderly courtship, less tinged with pity. "She's splendid!" cried Stasia. Mrs. Fielding, at these interruptions, looked explosively annoyed. And Stasia went on to read her uncle's chronicle of events—of Amy's work in the East for several months, of her visit to her brother in New Mexico during the winter, and of his visits to Santa Fe to see her. "And the end of them all is to-day, Sister Anna," he wrote. "She knows now that it was not pity, or chivalry, or any of those substitutes I offered her that morning at your house, but the real thing. And we were married at ten o'clock this morning. And we wish that you would

all come out to the ranch to see us. This is a bona-fide invitation, and holds good as long as we live."

"How I wish I could go!" cried Stasia, folding the letter, and looking misty-eyed away into space.

Anna Fielding arose. She stretched an imperative hand out for the letter.

"What I have ever done that I should be cursed with such positive lunatics for relatives I don't know!" she said, not the less stormily because she spoke in a low voice. "Why you don't all seek mates and social comradeship behind prison doors—" Her indignation would not let her finish the speech. But Stasia continued to look absently toward the horizon with a longing in her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Hello!" said Mrs. Fielding dispiritedly at the telephone. It was the telephone on the desk in her boudoir, and she was dressing for a dinner at a neighbor's. She was dressing without enthusiasm, without much interest. Bar Harbor had not set the topsy-turvy world straight. It had not restored Stasia's interest in life, or the vivid bloom to Stasia's clear olive cheek. It had not rendered Hopkinson reasonable when he was induced to visit his family. It had not put Eustace's autumn book in the best-seller class. The Waldo cottage had not included in the advantages it offered its tenants the privilege of being made an intimate in the colony—some people had been quite snobby. The zest was strangely



"Why," cried Robinski jubilantly, "why, here we are!"

gone out of living, and Anna was tired enough with her day's travel, topping her season's disappointment, to speak lackadaisically instead of with her usual crisp interest. But at the sound of the next words in her ears she became a little more animated. "Oh, Mrs. Henderson!" she cried. "I thought you were abroad. Oh, Wednesday, on the *Cedric*? Oh, are they? Found it! Where? O-h! Oh, very well. I'm glad she got it, anyway. That's kind of her. Certainly. She is quite right. Shall we say to-morrow at four, then? Oh, charming, thank you! There's no such air anywhere, I think. We had the Waldos' cottage. Well, then, to-morrow at four." She hung up the receiver, and called to her husband in his dressing room:

"Eustace, what do you think? That Larrabee woman is back again—they crossed with the Hendersons on the *Cedric*. And she's found her bag—"



Here's the young woman herself!

"Stasia always said she never lost it," he called back.

"Oh, but she did! But she found it in some way that she wants to tell us about—she thinks we ought to know. So the Hendersons are to bring her to tea to-morrow. I'll be glad to have her here, and to hear that mystery explained. I want the curse raised. It seems to me that we've had nothing but bad luck—well, nothing brilliantly successful—since that day when she lost it."

"Why, what do you mean? What's amiss?" queried Eustace, strolling to the door of the room, his toilet operations over, ready for the evening.

"Oh, nothing—everything!" answered Anna, withdrawing her buttoned wrist from her maid, and nodding her dismissal of that functionary.

"Nothing, perhaps. But there's Hop and his infatuation, and Stasia—she's not well. And—I don't know."

"You're not yourself, dear," said Eustace kindly. "Don't you want me to telephone the Gerstlings and say we can't come? We ought not to have made an engagement for the very day of our return."

"Oh, I'm all right. Only—why are our children so difficult, Eustace? Stasia could have married either young De Witt or Sir Edwin Barclay this summer, and she rejected them both. And she's twenty-eight. And look at Hop! There's that nice, rich, pretty, intelligent Fanny Browning really heels over head in love with him—and does he even know that she's alive? I am discouraged, Eustace. I'm a worldling, and I want my children to do well in the eyes of the world, to be honored for worldly things, to be prosperous—even fashionable. And they—"

"They won't agree?" Eustace placed the cloak about his wife's graceful shoulders. "Well, they're an obstinate pair. We'll whip them in the morning, and make them do as Anna wants."

"Anyway," said Anna irrelevantly, "I'm glad we're to know the mystery of the gold bag at last."

Stasia had left Bar Harbor a week earlier than her parents to pay a visit to the Beverly Moores, who, with magnificent courage and unlimited means, were storming the Newport citadel that summer. She was not to reach home for two or three days.

The next afternoon, when the Henderson motor stopped under the porticoche, both Mr. and Mrs. Fielding were on the terrace, waiting to receive the visitors and to hear the continuation of the story of the bag. Mrs. Larrabee, not less angular, monumental, and glit-

tering for her extra year of life, responded importantly to the greetings of the Fieldings; while Mrs. Henderson, behind her, shrugged her shoulders and wrinkled her brows in mute indication that she was in no wise responsible for her guest's peculiarities of speech or manner. The gentlemen of the party behaved as men usually behave when aggressive woman has the floor—they also silently disclaimed in dumb show to one another responsibility for anything that might be said or done, and took refuge more or less apart from the ladies.

"I considered it my duty, Mrs. Fielding," began Mrs. Larrabee firmly, as one who never shirked duty, "to see you at once, and to let you know what I have learned."

"You are most kind," said Anna Fielding, sweetly defensive. "I have always felt an immense curiosity about the bag. I am so glad to see you have it again."

"Yes," replied the owner of the bag, opening it by its conspicuously beautiful seal sapphire clasp, and drawing a paper from it. "Yes, I have it. But you will let me say that more than your curiosity should be concerned in the matter—your genuine interest, your self-interest, Mrs. Fielding. For you must surely be personally concerned to know which of your servants—"

"You had better begin with your story, Victoria," interrupted her husband. "Mrs. Fielding will see, as you tell it, whether or not it concerns her."

Mrs. Larrabee received the suggestion without gratitude. But she acted upon it, which was, after all, the important thing.

"It was a simply amazing coincidence. As we were coming over on the *Cedric*, the first day out, I sat in the outer steamer chair of the group of four that belonged to our party—Mr. and Mrs. Henderson crossed with us, you know; we had all been motoring in France together; not merely a pleasure trip, for Mr. Larrabee was studying factory conditions there, as he is to continue his stud—"

"Victoria, dear, the story!" interrupted the student of conditions and the spouse of Victoria. She frowned at the interruption, but obeyed the hint.

"Well, as I was saying, I sat down in the outermost of our group of chairs, which happened to be next that of an American traveler—a woman with the most amazing pronunciation—"

"Pennsylvania 'r,'" elucidated Mrs. Henderson.

"And the most remarkable clothes," pursued Mrs. Larrabee, "I have ever encountered. However, I did not waste much time upon these peculiarities. For we had exchanged only a few words when she fumbled under her rug for something, and drew forth—my bag! She was looking for a handkerchief, and as she opened the bag to pull it out I said: 'I beg your pardon, but may I look at your bag?' She turned red, and stared at me rather queerly, and for a second I thought that maybe, in some way, she might have been the thief—"

"Whereas," explained Mrs. Henderson purringly, "it was soon apparent that she merely thought our dear Mrs. Larrabee a peculiarly bold and bare-faced thief who was going to snatch her possessions from her then and there."

"After we cleared up that," continued the narrator, "she allowed me to look at it. There was no mistake; it was my bag, seal sapphire and all. I told her the circumstances of my losing it, and asked to know when and how she had obtained it. At first she seemed very reluctant to tell me—acted really most suspiciously. But her husband, to whom she appealed, was a man of some sense; he told her that she was laying herself open to the most unpleasant surmises by her attitude, and that it was much less disgraceful to be known as a patron of pawnbrokers' sales than to be suspected of being a receiver of stolen goods. And that, of course, showed us the reason for her secretiveness; she buys jewelry and knickknacks at pawnbrokers' sales—fancy! And she had bought my bag the middle of last July at a pawn-

broker's sale in Jersey City while she was waiting to take the steamer over—they were trippers, she and her husband, six-week tours of the Continent. She finally consented to give it up to me, my husband—foolishly, I think—insisting upon my paying her the amount that she had given for the thing. She was going home to—what was the amazing name of the place she was going to, dear?"

"Alleghany," supplied Mrs. Henderson.

"Yes, Alleghany. She was going home to Alleghany, and she signed this affidavit"—Mrs. Larrabee waved before their eyes the paper she had taken from the bag—"when we landed. And I went immediately—with a detective, a Pinkerton; I was disgusted with the stupidity of those I employed last summer—to the pawnbroker's in Jersey City to corroborate her story and to find if there were any traces of the missing ring and the other things. He proved to be a sort of clearing house for pawned things, but he gave us the name and address of the man from whom he had had the bag, and we went there. There we learned that the bag had been pawned by a woman with whom the man had had some slight former dealings last summer a few days after I lost the bag. The black pearl was also pawned at the same time. He had received no interest on the loan for over a year; he had not seen the woman again—he kept calling her 'the lady,' but he was a nasty little person who couldn't have recognized a lady had he seen one. Of course, the name and address she gave him were fictitious. And at the close of the year he had turned it in to be sold at an auction this other man—Markovitz—was having. And there you are!"

They looked at one another, a little dazed by the march of the coincidence. Anna Fielding and her husband stared at each other. Had Amy Ghent, after all— And now she was married to John! But—there were other possibilities. The thought of them strengthened Anna's voice as she said:

"I see your point, of course, Mrs.

Larrabee. If one of my servants took the bag, she might have pawned it in Jersey City, or might have had it pawned there. But—if some one else took it; if—Mrs. Henderson's chauffeur, for example—"

"It never was poor Lemoine!" interrupted Lemoine's employer.

"Or any one who picked it up from the roadside—it would have been just as easy for that person to pawn it in Jersey City as for my suppositiously guilty servant," Anna finished.

"Of course, it's nothing to me," replied Mrs. Larrabee, shrugging her shoulders. "I've got the bag, though I had to pay something to get it. I've my ring again—the police forced the little wretch to give it back to me. But I should think it wise of you—I should even go so far as to think it your duty—to see the man and let him have a chance to pick out the pawnier of that bag if she is a member of your household. You owe it not only to yourself, but to your future guests."

"She sounds quite relentlessly right, doesn't she?" observed Mrs. Henderson. "Have you the same servants, by the way, Mrs. Fielding, as you had last year?"

"Entirely the same," replied Anna monotonously.

"Lucky woman!" answered her neighbor lightly.

Anna thought for a second. She struggled with a reluctance that she could not explain to herself. She hated the thought of the identification farce; of course, the pawnbroker would not recognize the pawnier of the stolen bag among any whom she could marshal before him for inspection; were not both the suspects far away? Clarice Tenney—Derwent—whatever the girl's real name was, she reflected impatiently, and Amy Ghent—Amy Hopkinson now!—they were far away, and safe enough. As for the bovine crowd she could array before him—dull, good, honest souls, more careful of their honesty than of any other possession—among them he would strike none whom he could damn for all time with his knowledge.

"If you will give me the man's name and address," she said, "I will communicate with him at once. You are right, of course. It will be the simplest way of settling the matter once for all, as far as our servants are concerned. I'll telephone him," she added feverishly. Now that she had decided on her course, she was burning with impatience to be about it.

"Well, you Americans certainly are—what do you call it?—hustlers when you are once started," admitted Mrs. Larrabee. "You'll let me hear how it comes out, won't you? I shall be so interested."

"Yes, indeed. Can't you come yourself—you and Mrs. Henderson—to the inquisition? I'll tell the man to-morrow afternoon. What is his name? Robinski—" She murmured the address as she copied it.

"I can't come, thank you. Mr. Larrabee and I go on to-night to Lawrence. He wants to be an actual witness of one of the big new labor riots."

"And we're off for Tuxedo for a few days," said Mrs. Henderson. "But you'll surely let us know, won't you?"

"Surely," replied Anna gayly. And then Baum brought the tea, and Mrs. Larrabee discoursed about labor conditions as her husband had found them. And he occasionally supplied a grave correction. And Anna Fielding tried in the midst of conversation to read her own mind. Was she relieved that Amy Ghent was not here to be the victim of a horrible recognition? Or was she sorry? And, anyway, and after all, was it not more likely to have been Clarice, the beloved of her son? Nothing would be cleared by the farcical performance of the morrow, for Mr. Robinski, caught on the long-distance telephone by Baum, and interrogated by Eustace, had replied that he would come on the next afternoon to oblige Mrs. Fielding, adding airily that he would run over in his car, as a Westchester motor trip would be pleasant at the season—to Eustace's unreasonable anger. And, all arrangements made, Anna sighed in some relief; at least, obscure as the matter would remain, she would have

acceded to the demands of the sufferer; she would be rid of the affair.

CHAPTER IX.

To the servants that morning Mrs. Fielding was the great lady coming down to that delightfully democratic plane of human relationship where favors are asked as well as bestowed. She asked Hannah and Baum and all her household staff to do her a service not nominated in the bond of their engagement; she explained to them that it was to satisfy no suspicion of her own that she made the plea, but to rid herself of the importunities of outsiders. In short, though not in plain words, she requested that they would aid her in clearing her house of a suspicion. Anna was tactful when she chose to be; perhaps her tact was more successfully used with her social inferiors—persons not too critical in their views of diplomacy, not too questioning of all friendly overtures—than with other people. This morning, at any rate, it was gloriously triumphant. The whole body of servants felt that the peace and, to a certain extent, the reputation of their employers' house were in their hands, and they generously agreed to save them.

Mr. Robinski, faithful to his agreement, steamed noisily up through the grounds of Penfield a little after luncheon. Within five minutes it had been necessary for Mr. Fielding to assure him that his time and effort were regarded by the family as worthy of compensation, and to listen to the history of his purchase of the little car that he ran.

"Very interesting," commented Eustace curtly, when the recital had at last been cut short. "But we will not detain you to tell us anything further. The servants—they are the ones we have had for several years—will come into the library, pass through it, and out into another room. If you should by any strange chance recognize one of them as your customer, you will please give no sign until the procession has finished. Then you can tell me. But I

anticipate no such outcome of the investigation. It is really a little farcical, to my mind."

Mr. Robinski opined that you never could tell, and that the employer who relied upon the honesty of his servants was relying upon a broken reed. Then he added an easy word or two of approval of Penfield, and asked, in confidential fashion, at how much Mr. Fielding valued it. The eminent novelist, perturbed by the necessity for action in fields foreign to his tastes, took off his glasses, rubbed them, replaced them, surveyed his interlocutor through them with a look that bespoke repulsion, and then answered: "My home is not for sale, sir."

"Ah, well, you've got a good property here when you get ready to sell," flatteringly averred the unabashed Mr. Robinski. Then they went into the library, where Anna awaited them, nervous and agitated in spite of herself.

As they entered the library the telephone rang. Mr. Fielding answered it.

Anna heard his "Too bad; take a station hack." Then he hung up the receiver, and, in answer to Anna's upraised brows, said: "Stasia—unmet. Said she couldn't raise the garage."

"Oh, of course. I thought she wasn't coming until to-morrow."

Mr. Robinski, with a happy air of intimacy with Cordova leather, passed an approving hand over Eustace's pet chair before sitting down in it at the head of the library table. He offered Mr. Fielding a gold-banded cigar as that gentleman seated himself at one side of the same table. Mr. Fielding declined it ill-humoredly.

Hannah was the first to enter the audience chamber and to pass before the tribunal. She glared vitriolically at the pawnbroker, who was puffing blue rings into the air, but looking out sharply enough from among them.

"Little lemon tart!" commented Mr. Robinski merrily when the door had closed upon her. "But she wasn't any one I ever saw before."

One by one they came, some pale with fright in spite of the conscious-

ness of innocence, some giggling over a lark. The menservants followed after the women; perhaps Robinski might recognize one of them as a customer, and thus claim the right to look over his female relatives later. But the men, too, passed unscathed beneath the pawnbroker's watchful eyes.

"No," he said regretfully at the end of the ceremony, "I haven't ever seen one of them before, to the best of my knowledge. Certainly there ain't none of them the one that left the bag with me. Say!" he cried, with sudden happy inspiration. "Have you ever missed anything else? I could tell you what else the same young woman had left with me from time to time before—only she always redeemed them."

"We have lost nothing else, and need detain you no longer," said Eustace briefly. He had almost handed Mr. Robinski his motoring coat in his eagerness to get rid of the antipathetic presence.

"There was a necklace that was a beaut!" reminisced Mr. Robinski, fondling his cap slowly, and dwelling lovingly upon his memory of the necklace. "An old-fashioned one, but good stones—pearls an' emeralds. But she redeemed that."

"What kind of a necklace did you say?" demanded Anna sharply.

"Pearls and emeralds—nice stones, too, but not chick an' up to date in the settin'. Why, ma'am," Robinski's face sharpened like a fox's, "had you anything of that sort?"

"No," answered Anna incisively. "I thought you said rubies. I was not attending. Rubies and rose diamonds, I thought you said. I have a necklace like that. We need detain you no longer." She looked appealingly at her husband, whose eyes were fixed with amazement upon her. But he responded promptly to her appeal for help for riddance from this pest.

"No, we need not keep you longer. Twenty-five dollars I believe you said, Mr. Robinski? Here you are. You were very kind to take so much trouble. I—he forced himself to be courteous—"I will see you to your car. I fancy

the servants are not yet recovered from their upsetting experience."

They all moved together into the hall. At the front door stood the driver of the station hack, carrying Stasia's bag. Stasia, tall, brown, sumptuous even in the severity of her tailored traveling frock and toque, stood beside him.

"Oh, there you are!" she cried cheerfully from the other side of the fastened copper screening that debarred her entrance. "What's happened to the house? Why is there no one on duty? I've been ringing quite fi—" She encountered the surprised stare of Robinski full upon her. She broke off abruptly, staring at him with slowly whitening face, with slowly dilating eyes. "Five minutes," she finished then, when the stare of recognition passed.

"Why," cried Robinski jubilantly, "why, here we are! Here's the young woman herself!"

CHAPTER X.

In after years—when the form that Anna Fielding's occasional nightmare always wore was the face of a devil, grinning triumphantly, with Robinski's cigar in its mouth and Robinski's motor cap upon its head; and beside it her daughter's, white, frightened, discovered—in those after years there was always one thing that comforted her. It was that even in the dazed moment of her horror, of her disbelief, of her utter overthrow, she perceived and believed in her husband's power to cope with the dreadful situation. While she stood clinging to the back of a hall chair with fingers that bore for days the cruel marks of the carving, wondering if the hideous moment was to last forever, all of them petrified for eternity in their poses, suddenly the horrid spell was broken. Eustace seemed to take Robinski easily by the elbow, seemed to steer him out of the house, seemed to speak to Stasia and the hackman with his accustomed air. Afterward she learned that he had indeed said lightly to Stasia: "We were not looking for you so soon; go in; I'll join you in a moment," and that he had

firmly guided the reluctant pawnbroker toward the automobile standing in the shelter of a rhododendron clump at one side of the driveway. And that to that gentleman's "So it was a friend, an' not a servant! So it was a visitor—a tony one, too!" he had answered: "You have grasped the situation, Mr. Robinski." And to that gentleman's further comment, delivered with his finger against his nose, "Mum's the word, eh?" Eustace had further replied: "Mum's the word!" and had helped to spell the word with a fifty-dollar bill. That he—her husband, for whom she had "managed" for so many years—her husband, whom she was wont to half despise in her heart as inept, unready in emergencies—that he should have got rid of the man with no further words seemed to her then, and always seemed to her thereafter, a wonderful feat.

Eustace had returned swiftly to the house, passing the departing station hack as he did so. Anna was still standing where he had left her, still clinging to the back of the great hall chair. Stasia had flung herself on an old oak bench opposite, and her face was hidden by her gloved hands.

"Come up to my study," Eustace had said. And Anna, whose dulled wits had suggested to her no better procedure than a "scene," a haughty cross-questioning of her daughter, a parental anathema, was amazed at the gentleness of his voice. Stasia's hands came down at the sound; she looked at him with wild, unbelief appealing and hope in her great eyes. And she arose obediently, and swayed toward the stairway. He came over to where Anna stood, and took her gently by the hand. He kissed her cold, white cheek. "My poor love!" he said tenderly. And she clung to him closely, as a child clings to a strong hand in the unknown dark.

His big study ran the whole length of the top story. The embers of the little fire by which he had worked that morning were faintly red in the ashes on the hearth. He put a stick of wood above them, patiently blew them into flame with a pair of bellows, and then

pulled a chair for Anna before the blaze. There was a bottle of sherry in the little cupboard in the chimney breast, and he poured her a glass of it and made her swallow it before he turned to Stasia. And still the girl's stricken, wondering eyes found his eyes kind.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly, the words torn from her, it seemed. "Oh, I swear I never realized what it would mean to you!" She threw her hat across the room; she sat down, brushing her dark hair back from her forehead as if it hurt her. "I swear it—father—mother!"

"Oh!" cried Anna, in sudden bitterness. "Tell us the story—tell us what it means—before you begin to talk about your feelings."

The younger woman's face hardened, but broke again at the kindness of her father's: "Yes, Stasia, tell us what it means."

"That is reasonable," she replied. "I'll try to tell you. I took the creature's bag and pawned it in order to be able to give Beverly Moore some money that he needed. I had often pawned little things of my own for the same purpose—I'd been doing it for years."

"Beverly!" cried Anna, aghast. "You—you—"

The girl laughed bitterly. "I was his friend, his cousin, his comrade, with whom he was on the same terms as with a man chum. There was no 'mine' and 'thine' in the relation. What was mine was Beverly's; what was his was mine—that was the theory—only Beverly had nothing, and I had a good deal."

"But—pawning—why, child, you had your grandfather's legacy! How much did Beverly want of you—"

Stasia drew a check, pink and crisp, from her bag. She opened it slowly, and she said:

"What he had from me was twenty-three thousand four hundred and eighty-five dollars. He has just paid it back. I don't know how much he may have wanted. He has had in the last seven or eight years—since I came into

control of grandfather's money—all that."

"The vile young scoundrel!" It was Eustace who spoke. "And what did he do with the money?"

"Paid debts with it, I suppose. Gambling debts largely. He speculated a good deal in a little way—the first money was to protect his margins on some stock that was sure to go up if he only had enough to save his shares. And the next was a joint investment for both of us in something that was going to make poor old Talty's five per cent investments look ridiculous. That went, of course. And—well, when he found he had a bank that was going to honor his demands at all hazards, he got it on every sort of pretense. I dare say the money I raised on that—that horrid bag—paid his tailor's bill. He had confided to me that he was being hounded to death by duns, all for the want of a beggarly couple of hundreds. And I had told him I would get them for him by the next day. And then—there lay the accursed, glittering thing in your room, mother. And I hadn't any very valuable jewelry that wouldn't be missed—I had pawned my pearl and emerald necklace only a little while before for him—and—oh, I don't know why I did it! But I did. I knew she was sailing the next day, and I didn't realize the sapphire seal or the black pearl inside. I thought—oh, that I would have lots of chance to redeem it before there was a hue and cry about it. And that she would fume a little, and then have a good mystery story for years in its unexplained restoration. I reckoned without the excellent Mrs. Larabee."

"But," cried poor, bewildered Anna, "the silver, the attempted robbery—"

"Don't you see?" Stasia spoke with a sort of impatience. "When the hue and cry was made that very afternoon I grew obstinate. I had hidden the thing in my fishing boots. And I determined to go ahead with my plan—to borrow her old bag for as long as I needed it. But then you suspected that poor sweetheart of Hop's, mother, and I felt thrown out of all my reckoning.

I couldn't have you go on in your mind making her—poor, shabby, hurt little person!—guilty of my crime. But I couldn't tell you the truth. So—it was a plant of mine, that silver affair, rather a stupid one, it seems to me now. I thought I could arrange things so that it would appear that a burglary had been attempted at Penfield. Very well; a burglary would presuppose burglars in the neighborhood. What more likely than that one of them had sneaked into the house under cover of the confusion of the storm that day, had snatched Mrs. Larrabee's bag, and had been frightened away too soon to gather up anything more? So I planted the silver which you were all to suppose the burglarious one had returned to get; and then dear Miss Amy, who was sleeping lightly and nervously—all the thief talk had, of course, gotten her on edge with the recollection of her Chicago experience—she heard the noise, and went down to investigate. And—well, that brilliant performance only made hideous trouble and confusion for her. So I gave up trying to clear any one. And there you have it all—except'—her voice fell, her chin sank upon her breast—"except truly I never thought what it would mean to you and mother, father. I don't know why. I suppose because I never thought of any one except—Beverly—in those days."

There was a long, heart-breaking silence. Anna felt that she must not speak until her husband had given her the cue—she was shattered into a strange humility. Eustace looked out through the window at the end of the room, pity and remorse, as well as pain, upon his face. By and by he sighed.

"Anna, dear," he said, "will you tell our daughter that we love her—that we don't know just where, through what ignorance or carelessness, we were at fault, but that we know we must have been. Tell her, dear, the one important thing—that our hearts are not closed to her. Tell her as only a woman can tell it. And by and by we'll arrange the less important, practical details of the affair."

Anna's bright eyes were drenched in

tears at her husband's words and tone. She put out her arms toward Stasia.

"Oh, my poor child!" she cried. "My poor child!" And Stasia, with a sob, hid her face against her mother's breast.

EPILOGUE.

If it were possible for poor human beings to live continuously upon the plane of their few best, their few great, moments, the Fielding family would have presented a totally changed appearance to the world for the rest of its existence. Stasia, of course, after a public confession to all who had heard of the loss of Mrs. Larrabee's bag, would have made restitution, and would then have devoted her energies to the uplifting of poor girls who were in divers ways the victims of their own ignorance of life, their folly, or their affections. Mrs. Fielding would have reasoned out to a logical conclusion the vague thoughts she had connecting the filial pretense and hypocrisy of which she was guilty as a Hopkinson with the more serious dishonesty of her daughter; she would have followed to their inevitable ending her misgivings about the value of the ambitions she had pursued to the neglect of intimate companionship with her children; she would have learned to distrust utterly the rôle of family providence, of family manager, which she had assumed all her life, and would have sought only to know the tendencies of her children and her husband, and to guide them as wisely as human ignorance might guide, instead of trying to coerce them into the paths of her desires. And Eustace would have always been at his best, gifted with the greatest gift of the imaginative man—sympathetic understanding.

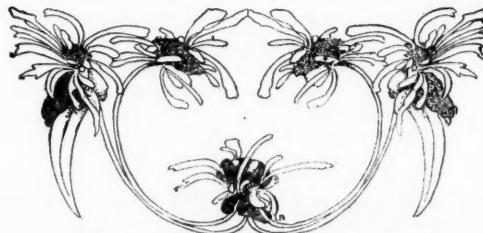
But if poor human nature were capable of remaining upon the high plane of its few great moments the millennium would be here for all the world as well as for Penfield. As it is, Penfield is merely a little better for all that it knew and suffered in those hard days. But it is a little better.

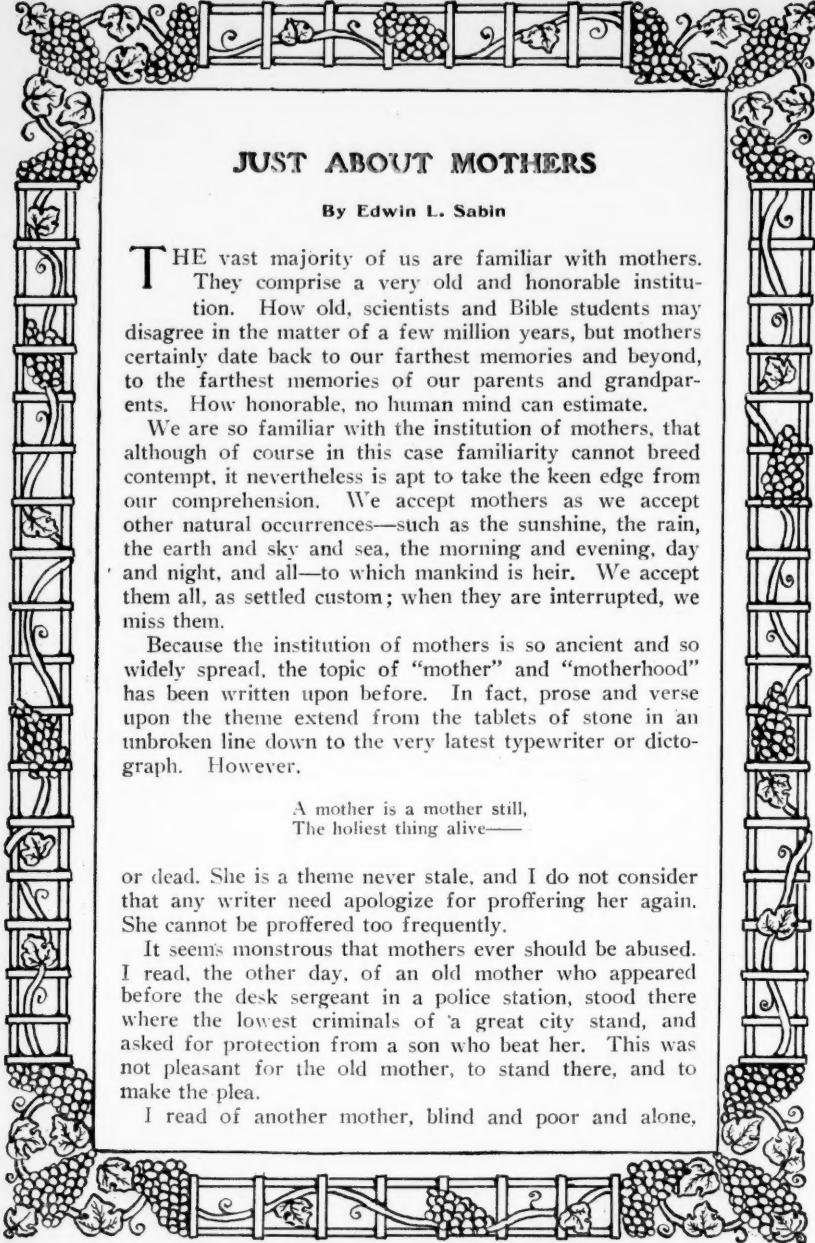
For instance, Clarice Derwent was

entreated in due form by a dignified elderly lady, whose cheeks were paler than Clarice remembered them, and whose eyes were red-rimmed with tears, to marry Hopkinson. Clarice was told by Stasia herself why no suspicion attached to her any longer. So was Amy Hopkinson, who replied by a telegram that overspilled all the limits of day and night letters, and insisted upon Stasia's coming at once to the ranch—a wonderful place, in which, it appeared, cures of every kind were wrought—physical, mental, and spiritual. Mr. Larrabee was informed by Mr. Fielding that it had been discovered that the theft of Mrs. Larrabee's bag was the work of a member of the family, doubtless acting under a temporary aberration of mind; and he was requested to send to Mr. Fielding all bills for detective service, for redemption of the bag, and in short for all moneys that had been expended in the matter; and Mr. Larrabee obliged Mr. Fielding with the bills and a polite note which intimated that such temporary aberrations were likely to happen in any one's family, and which added that the matter was now, for both Mrs. Larrabee and himself, a permanently sealed chapter. And the gates of Penfield were closed upon the Beverly Moores, the gentleman in the case being given to understand that his discovered financial dealings with a daughter of the house debarred him from entrance even though his mercenary marriage had enabled him to pay his indebtedness; and Mrs. Moore accepting contentedly for a half year her husband's explanation that "poor old Stasia couldn't carry it off any longer; she had been—though he hated to say

such a caddish thing—pretty hard hit by his marriage." After the half year, however, Mrs. Moore, who was beginning to revise her views on many questions, somewhat doubted this explanation. But she had also learned the value of silence as to suspicions, and she said nothing.

There is no loss to which men do not, after a fashion, accustom themselves. There is no shock to which, if we survive it, we do not eventually accommodate ourselves. Men lose their arms, their legs, their hearing of earth's sounds, their sight of its wonders, the dear companionship of their loves, and they go on living cheerfully, normally after a while. So at Penfield the family, robbed of its assurance, its pride, its wholesome belief in itself, by and by found itself jogging along the familiar ways with the first pain, the first bewilderment and anguish, mysteriously gone, mysteriously transmuted into the fabric of everyday life. Even Stasia by and by forgot to feel herself abnormal, set apart; even she, thanks in part to Amy Hopkinson, who had come triumphantly whole through her own maiming trial, grew finally able to look the world again in the face—even the close, intimate world of her home; grew able to believe in herself, to feel the power of her new self, and only to pity, no longer to dread, the poor, weak, passionately loving thing she had once been. There is but one supreme trial from which she shrinks in the future—yet feels a hope in the midst of her terror. It is the trial of telling the man who has a right to know—her Uncle John's partner—the story, and awaiting his verdict upon it.





JUST ABOUT MOTHERS

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE vast majority of us are familiar with mothers. They comprise a very old and honorable institution. How old, scientists and Bible students may disagree in the matter of a few million years, but mothers certainly date back to our farthest memories and beyond, to the farthest memories of our parents and grandparents. How honorable, no human mind can estimate.

We are so familiar with the institution of mothers, that although of course in this case familiarity cannot breed contempt, it nevertheless is apt to take the keen edge from our comprehension. We accept mothers as we accept other natural occurrences—such as the sunshine, the rain, the earth and sky and sea, the morning and evening, day and night, and all—to which mankind is heir. We accept them all, as settled custom; when they are interrupted, we miss them.

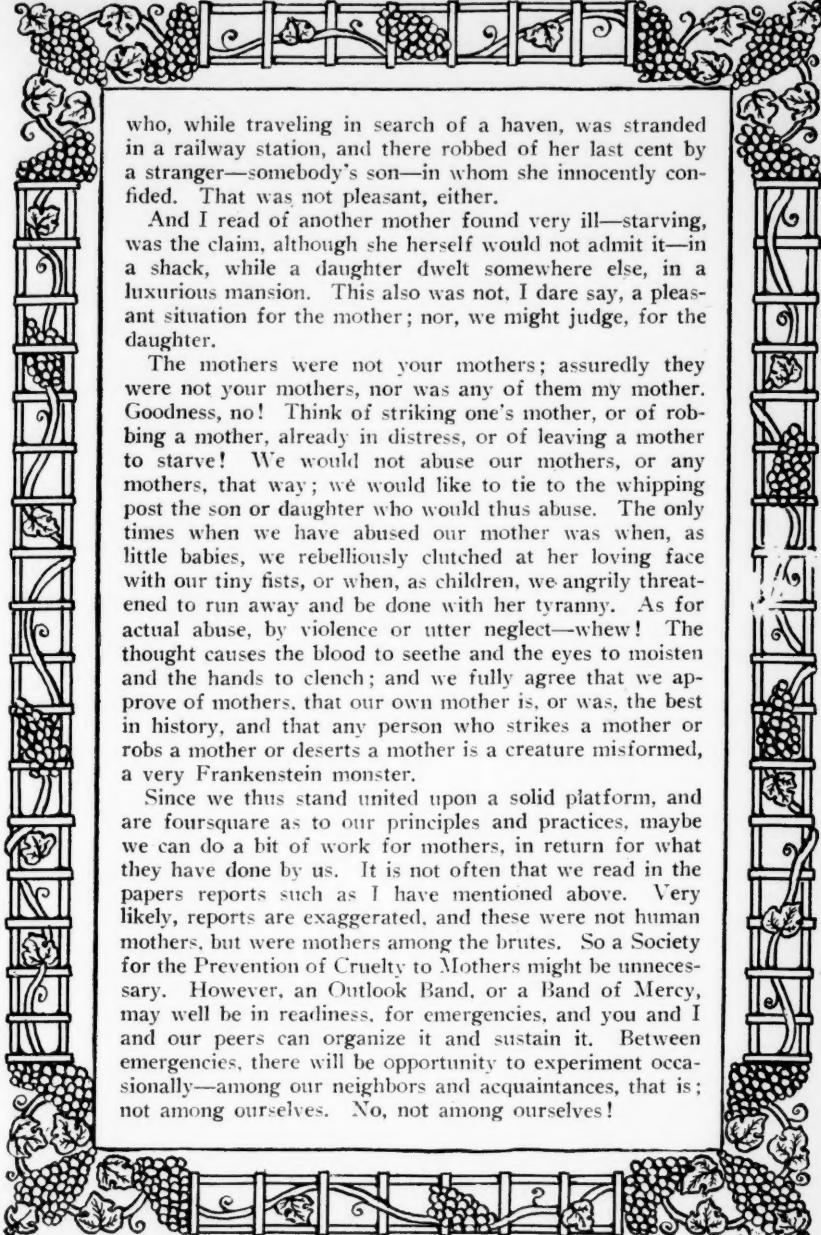
Because the institution of mothers is so ancient and so widely spread, the topic of "mother" and "motherhood" has been written upon before. In fact, prose and verse upon the theme extend from the tablets of stone in an unbroken line down to the very latest typewriter or dictograph. However,

A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive—

or dead. She is a theme never stale, and I do not consider that any writer need apologize for proffering her again. She cannot be proffered too frequently.

It seems monstrous that mothers ever should be abused. I read, the other day, of an old mother who appeared before the desk sergeant in a police station, stood there where the lowest criminals of a great city stand, and asked for protection from a son who beat her. This was not pleasant for the old mother, to stand there, and to make the plea.

I read of another mother, blind and poor and alone,

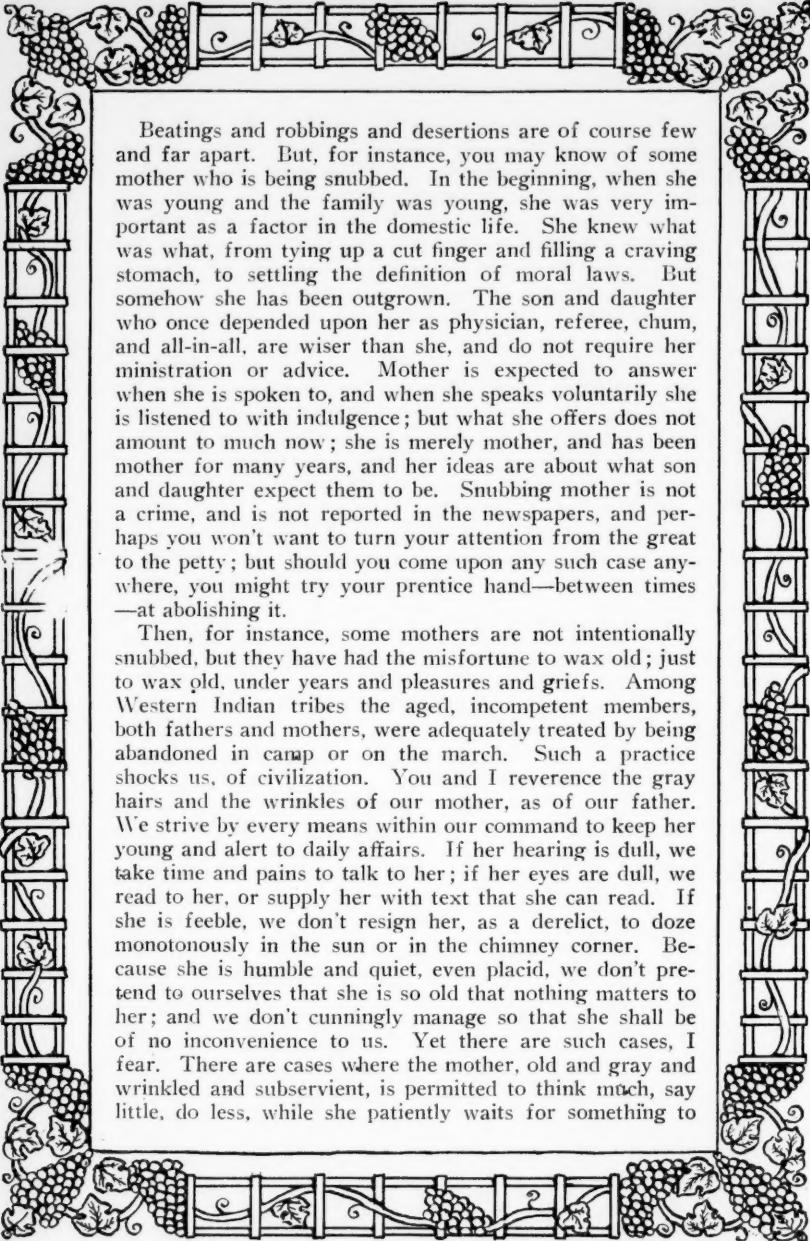


who, while traveling in search of a haven, was stranded in a railway station, and there robbed of her last cent by a stranger—somebody's son—in whom she innocently confided. That was not pleasant, either.

And I read of another mother found very ill—starving, was the claim, although she herself would not admit it—in a shack, while a daughter dwelt somewhere else, in a luxurious mansion. This also was not, I dare say, a pleasant situation for the mother; nor, we might judge, for the daughter.

The mothers were not your mothers; assuredly they were not your mothers, nor was any of them my mother. Goodness, no! Think of striking one's mother, or of robbing a mother, already in distress, or of leaving a mother to starve! We would not abuse our mothers, or any mothers, that way; we would like to tie to the whipping post the son or daughter who would thus abuse. The only times when we have abused our mother was when, as little babies, we rebelliously clutched at her loving face with our tiny fists, or when, as children, we angrily threatened to run away and be done with her tyranny. As for actual abuse, by violence or utter neglect—whew! The thought causes the blood to seethe and the eyes to moisten and the hands to clench; and we fully agree that we approve of mothers, that our own mother is, or was, the best in history, and that any person who strikes a mother or robs a mother or deserts a mother is a creature misformed, a very Frankenstein monster.

Since we thus stand united upon a solid platform, and are foursquare as to our principles and practices, maybe we can do a bit of work for mothers, in return for what they have done by us. It is not often that we read in the papers reports such as I have mentioned above. Very likely, reports are exaggerated, and these were not human mothers, but were mothers among the brutes. So a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Mothers might be unnecessary. However, an Outlook Band, or a Band of Mercy, may well be in readiness, for emergencies, and you and I and our peers can organize it and sustain it. Between emergencies, there will be opportunity to experiment occasionally—among our neighbors and acquaintances, that is; not among ourselves. No, not among ourselves!



Beatings and robberies and desertions are of course few and far apart. But, for instance, you may know of some mother who is being snubbed. In the beginning, when she was young and the family was young, she was very important as a factor in the domestic life. She knew what was what, from tying up a cut finger and filling a craving stomach, to settling the definition of moral laws. But somehow she has been outgrown. The son and daughter who once depended upon her as physician, referee, chum, and all-in-all, are wiser than she, and do not require her ministrations or advice. Mother is expected to answer when she is spoken to, and when she speaks voluntarily she is listened to with indulgence; but what she offers does not amount to much now; she is merely mother, and has been mother for many years, and her ideas are about what son and daughter expect them to be. Snubbing mother is not a crime, and is not reported in the newspapers, and perhaps you won't want to turn your attention from the great to the petty; but should you come upon any such case anywhere, you might try your prentice hand—between times—at abolishing it.

Then, for instance, some mothers are not intentionally snubbed, but they have had the misfortune to wax old; just to wax old, under years and pleasures and griefs. Among Western Indian tribes the aged, incompetent members, both fathers and mothers, were adequately treated by being abandoned in camp or on the march. Such a practice shocks us, of civilization. You and I reverence the gray hairs and the wrinkles of our mother, as of our father. We strive by every means within our command to keep her young and alert to daily affairs. If her hearing is dull, we take time and pains to talk to her; if her eyes are dull, we read to her, or supply her with text that she can read. If she is feeble, we don't resign her, as a derelict, to doze monotonously in the sun or in the chimney corner. Because she is humble and quiet, even placid, we don't pretend to ourselves that she is so old that nothing matters to her; and we don't cunningly manage so that she shall be of no inconvenience to us. Yet there are such cases, I fear. There are cases where the mother, old and gray and wrinkled and subservient, is permitted to think much, say little, do less, while she patiently waits for something to

do if one was a proper young lady. But I was never very proper, and now I am not very young." She laughed and rose. "I've got to get back early," she added. "Mother has a dinner on to-night, and she thinks she needs me."

"But—I can't let you go like this! I never dreamed—that is—oh, Stasia, what I have lost!"

"Nothing so much," said Stasia, under good control now. "I probably exaggerated everything, including my devotion, under the momentary whip of jealousy. Try to forget it. When shall I write to your Vieva?"

"Whenever you will. I told her I should let you know at once. I told her—that we were like dear brother and sister. She—she is prepared to adore you." Eustasia smiled skeptically, but said nothing. "And—and," he continued, with an honest red of embarrassment on his cheek, "as soon as—the marriage settlements are made—it's all to be very comfortably and decently arranged—I can pay you back what you've lent me these last eight or nine years. Except that no money on earth can repay it."

"Oh, that!" Eustasia dismissed the matter with a shrug. "But when are you to be married?" Her eyes seemed to shrink from the knowledge her lips demanded.

"In June," he answered, in a low voice, his eyes averted.

"June weddings are pretty," she said lightly. "Southern ones especially. Well, good-by. My taxi's waiting; I don't believe I'll offer to put you down anywhere. I—I want to be by myself for a little while."

"Oh, my poor love!" he breathed almost inaudibly, although his look interpreted the murmur to her ears. His eyes dwelt upon her longingly, sadly, with the gaze of high renunciation. When she had left the room he stood for a moment by the long parlor windows; he watched her spring into her cab. Not until it had started up Madison Avenue did he permit himself to wipe his damp forehead and to breathe a long sigh of relief.

"Gad!" he cried absently, but fer-

vently, to the surprise of the white-capped young person removing the tea things as he moved to the hall. "Gad! But I came out of that better than I dared hope. Poor old Stasia!"

CHAPTER VII.

Stasia had been the most brilliant of the guests at Vieva Hartridge's wedding. The Fielding family had attended the festivity at Roseacres, the Hartridges' summer place in the Blue Ridge Mountains, with a cordiality they would probably not have displayed had Beverly married less advantageously. Anna Fielding, after her first maternal fear that perhaps Stasia might feel her intimate cousin's defection to the rank of bachelors, had been whole-heartedly glad of the affair.

"Of course, the Hartridges are nobody—nobody at all, except for their West Virginia oil mines, which they had the good sense to sell while the oil was still gushing," she confided to her husband. "But Beverly can supply family. And he needs the money, Heaven knows! He's incorrigibly lazy; I used to think him able, but I doubt it now. However, one forgives it in him as one forgives so many things, because of his charm. And, thank Heaven, I need never worry again about Stasia's interest in him, and reproach myself for having admitted him to our house on the insecure family-connection basis. She seemed bubbling with delight and interest when it was announced."

"I always told you your forebodings were wide of the mark," answered Eustace indolently. "A mere bubbling interest at the time proved nothing, of course; haven't you ever noticed how my heroines affect that gayety to conceal et cetera, et cetera? But her enthusiasm remained sustained. And, besides, there was never anything in it—as I told you."

"I know you did," agreed Anna admiringly. "You can't think how glad I am you were proved right. Well, we'll all go—all of us grown-ups, at any rate, and give the seal of family sanc-

tion to the affair." Thus Mrs. Fielding cleverly turned into a favor to her cousin her desire to shine at a conspicuous wedding.

They had gone, except Hopkinson, who had been a little curt in resisting his mother's importunities. Had she not sturdily refused to give her consent, her welcome, to Clarice Derwent, even after the affair of the Penfield silver had practically exonerated her from the wild suspicion of having taken Mrs. Larrabee's bag? And had not Clarice—dear, proud, obstinate girl!—refused to be his wife except on his mother's invitation? He was not interested in other men's marriages—especially in Beverly Moore's. He had never cared for Beverly Moore; his mother knew that. He was rather peevish about the whole affair. And they had finally left him, and had journeyed to Virginia in a private car that the Hartridges had placed at the disposal of some intimate New York guests. And, the wedding had been charming, the bride quite pretty in her delicate, sunny youthfulness. And Stasia had been a starry, regal figure, surrounded by satellites, glittering among them; and she had caused Vieva to murmur to her lover the day before the wedding: "How did you ever fall in love with me, poor little me, when you knew her?" And Beverly had made the customary response to the not uncommon query; and had added the detail of his cousinship with Stasia. And all had been very well indeed.

But back at Penfield some of the restless brilliancy that had characterized Stasia for two months disappeared. To her mother's anxieties, she had admitted a prosaic indigestion—too gay a winter, she said; too elaborate a wedding breakfast. She would feel better when they went to Bar Harbor. Meantime she seemed to grow worse, paler, more languid, more irritated with the courteous necessities of living in a pleasant neighborhood, where there was much interchange of social amenities. Anna began to question the correctness of her first jubilant impression concerning Stasia's attitude toward her cousin's

marriage. She felt that she would be glad when they got away to Bar Harbor and had a chance to note the tonic effect of the northern sea air on the girl. But they had taken the Waldo cottage for only July and August—"And goodness knows it was hard enough to do that!" Anna reflected, viewing the stub in her check book that represented the holding price of the Waldos' residence. And she wished a little more impatiently than usual that Eustace would some day write a book whose sales would really make an impression on their exchequer.

June dragged on. Hopkinson departed hastily for the western part of the State one day, and the information percolated through the household that Clarice Derwent's father had been pardoned out of prison to die; that, more obliging and more honest than some others in that respect, he had actually fulfilled his part of the contract two weeks after his release; and that Hopkinson had hurried off to be with Clarice in her trial, perhaps at last to persuade her to wait no longer for the impossible, but to marry him at once.

"Just when her father's release and death would give the whole wretched affair an extra paragraph of newspaper notoriety," sighed Anna, thin-lipped and angry at the prospect. She and Stasia were on the terrace together, pictures of prosperous summer tranquillity behind the laurel tubs on the stone balustrade. But it occurred to Anna, aware of her own ire, that her emotions were not in as perfect control as they had been a while ago. Sometimes the wraiths of her anxieties even crowded about her bedside and forbade her to sleep—a thing that had never happened to her before. Her delicate skin, her bright eyes were bearing the telltale marks of her harassment.

"Why can't you give in, mother?" asked Stasia wearily. "Let them be happy—poor things—if they think they can be. Of course, you know that you've made the little actress person more to be desired than gold to Hop. It was the way to fight her battle for her. But what's the use? She seemed

all right enough. And as for her father—the Derwent man—why, there's so much high-class embezzlement these days, so many perfectly delightful embezzlers, that I don't see how he matters. As for the world's opinion—you're old-fashioned. The world doesn't give a snap of its manicured fingers for anything that doesn't concern its own comfort and amusement. It cares for nothing, remembers nothing. Nobody remembers anything. Why don't you give in?"

"The really serious aspect of the case does not seem to strike you," replied her mother, with a sort of angry dryness.

"I think it does. It seems to me a serious thing to keep two poor things apart who fancy they want to be together."

"Even admitting that the affair of the purse was cleared up—which I don't admit—the girl's father is a thief. There is dishonest blood in her veins. I do not care to see that strain transmitted to my grandchildren." Mrs. Fielding spoke rather rotundly, as one who recites the law and the prophets and feels the security of her argument. But Stasia laughed bitterly.

"Oh, I dare say if you're going to be such a stickler for heredity there are enough dishonest Fieldings, dishonest Hopkinsons, to make doubtful your grandchildren's—"

"Stasia!" cried her mother sharply. "I don't permit that loose kind of talking. The Fielding strain, the Hopkinson strain—" She remembered her father, shady trickster in business, boaster in society, and she hesitated for a second; then she went on firmly, denying the memory that had given her pause: "The Fielding and the Hopkinson strains are pure of that taint, at least," she finished.

"I wonder!" laughed Stasia unpleasantly, moving off the wide terrace and losing herself in the shrubbery beyond the house. She had wandered down to the brook, and was looking into the schoolroom, where Bob and Linda pursued all knowledge under the guidance of a new governess, when a servant

came hurrying after her. Her mother wished to speak to her, he said.

She hurried back to the house. Anna Fielding still sat where Stasia had left her, but a mid-morning mail was on the green wicker table before her. The girl saw it from afar—the leather bag fallen on the tiled floor. She marked the grace of the slender, erect, white-gowned figure, clear cut against the bright-red cushions of the piazza chair.

"She has had word that they have done it—gotten married," she thought to herself as she hurried over the lawn. There was a curious constriction at her heart. She sighed. She hoped they would be happy, poor Hop and the girl he loved. But she distrusted the universe; there was no happiness in it.

"Well, mother, dear?"

Anna held a letter speechlessly toward her. She took it, smiling.

"Have they gone and sold you, mother?" she asked. "Didn't she keep on being adamant—Hop's nice Clarice?"

"Read it!" said Anna tersely. And Stasia, opening the sheet, cried: "Why, it's from Colorado, from Uncle John!"

"Read it!" said her mother again, more impatiently. And Stasia read. She read how her Uncle John had wooed Miss Ghent on the morning of the disclosures concerning her past. "Oh, what an old brick!" she cried, with enthusiasm. She read how Amy Ghent had refused him, preferring a more orderly courtship, less tinged with pity. "She's splendid!" cried Stasia. Mrs. Fielding, at these interruptions, looked explosively annoyed. And Stasia went on to read her uncle's chronicle of events—of Amy's work in the East for several months, of her visit to her brother in New Mexico during the winter, and of his visits to Santa Fe to see her. "And the end of them all is to-day, Sister Anna," he wrote. "She knows now that it was not pity, or chivalry, or any of those substitutes I offered her that morning at your house, but the real thing. And we were married at ten o'clock this morning. And we wish that you would

all come out to the ranch to see us. This is a bona-fide invitation, and holds good as long as we live."

"How I wish I could go!" cried Stasia, folding the letter, and looking misty-eyed away into space.

Anna Fielding arose. She stretched an imperative hand out for the letter.

"What I have ever done that I should be cursed with such positive lunatics for relatives I don't know!" she said, not the less stormily because she spoke in a low voice. "Why you don't all seek mates and social comradeship behind prison doors—" Her indignation would not let her finish the speech. But Stasia continued to look absently toward the horizon with a longing in her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Hello!" said Mrs. Fielding dispiritedly at the telephone. It was the telephone on the desk in her boudoir, and she was dressing for a dinner at a neighbor's. She was dressing without enthusiasm, without much interest. Bar Harbor had not set the topsy-turvy world straight. It had not restored Stasia's interest in life, or the vivid bloom to Stasia's clear olive cheek. It had not rendered Hopkinson reasonable when he was induced to visit his family. It had not put Eustace's autumn book in the best-seller class. The Waldo cottage had not included in the advantages it offered its tenants the privilege of being made an intimate in the colony—some people had been quite snobby. The zest was strangely



"Why," cried Robinski jubilantly, "why, here we are!"

gone out of living, and Anna was tired enough with her day's travel, topping her season's disappointment, to speak lackadaisically instead of with her usual crisp interest. But at the sound of the next words in her ears she became a little more animated. "Oh, Mrs. Henderson!" she cried. "I thought you were abroad. Oh, Wednesday, on the *Cedric*? Oh, are they? Found it! Where? O-h! Oh, very well. I'm glad she got it, anyway. That's kind of her. Certainly. She is quite right. Shall we say to-morrow at four, then? Oh, charming, thank you! There's no such air anywhere, I think. We had the Waldos' cottage. Well, then, to-morrow at four." She hung up the receiver, and called to her husband in his dressing room:

"Eustace, what do you think? That Larrabee woman is back again—they crossed with the Hendersons on the *Cedric*. And she's found her bag—"



Here's the young woman herself!"

"Stasia always said she never lost it," he called back.

"Oh, but she did! But she found it in some way that she wants to tell us about—she thinks we ought to know. So the Hendersons are to bring her to tea to-morrow. I'll be glad to have her here, and to hear that mystery explained. I want the curse raised. It seems to me that we've had nothing but bad luck—well, nothing brilliantly successful—since that day when she lost it."

"Why, what do you mean? What's amiss?" queried Eustace, strolling to the door of the room, his toilet operations over, ready for the evening.

"Oh, nothing—everything!" answered Anna, withdrawing her buttoned wrist from her maid, and nodding her dismissal of that functionary.

"Nothing, perhaps. But there's Hop and his infatuation, and Stasia—she's not well. And—I don't know."

"You're not yourself, dear," said Eustace kindly. "Don't you want me to telephone the Gerstlings and say we can't come? We ought not to have made an engagement for the very day of our return."

"Oh, I'm all right. Only—why are our children so difficult, Eustace? Stasia could have married either young De Witt or Sir Edwin Barclay this summer, and she rejected them both. And she's twenty-eight. And look at Hop! There's that nice, rich, pretty, intelligent Fanny Browning really heels over head in love with him—and does he even know that she's alive? I am discouraged, Eustace. I'm a worlding, and I want my children to do well in the eyes of the world, to be honored for worldly things, to be prosperous—even fashionable. And they—"

"They won't agree?" Eustace placed the cloak about his wife's graceful shoulders. "Well, they're an obstinate pair. We'll whip them in the morning, and make them do as Anna wants."

"Anyway," said Anna irrelevantly, "I'm glad we're to know the mystery of the gold bag at last."

Stasia had left Bar Harbor a week earlier than her parents to pay a visit to the Beverly Moores, who, with magnificent courage and unlimited means, were storming the Newport citadel that summer. She was not to reach home for two or three days.

The next afternoon, when the Henderson motor stopped under the portecochère, both Mr. and Mrs. Fielding were on the terrace, waiting to receive the visitors and to hear the continuation of the story of the bag. Mrs. Larrabee, not less angular, monumental, and glit-

tering for her extra year of life, responded importantly to the greetings of the Fieldings; while Mrs. Henderson, behind her, shrugged her shoulders and wrinkled her brows in mute indication that she was in no wise responsible for her guest's peculiarities of speech or manner. The gentlemen of the party behaved as men usually behave when aggressive woman has the floor—they also silently disclaimed in dumb show to one another responsibility for anything that might be said or done, and took refuge more or less apart from the ladies.

"I considered it my duty, Mrs. Fielding," began Mrs. Larrabee firmly, as one who never shirked duty, "to see you at once, and to let you know what I have learned."

"You are most kind," said Anna Fielding, sweetly defensive. "I have always felt an immense curiosity about the bag. I am so glad to see you have it again."

"Yes," replied the owner of the bag, opening it by its conspicuously beautiful seal sapphire clasp, and drawing a paper from it. "Yes, I have it. But you will let me say that more than your curiosity should be concerned in the matter—your genuine interest, your self-interest, Mrs. Fielding. For you must surely be personally concerned to know which of your servants—"

"You had better begin with your story, Victoria," interrupted her husband. "Mrs. Fielding will see, as you tell it, whether or not it concerns her."

Mrs. Larrabee received the suggestion without gratitude. But she acted upon it, which was, after all, the important thing.

"It was a simply amazing coincidence. As we were coming over on the *Cedric*, the first day out, I sat in the outer steamer chair of the group of four that belonged to our party—Mr. and Mrs. Henderson crossed with us, you know; we had all been motoring in France together; not merely a pleasure trip, for Mr. Larrabee was studying factory conditions there, as he is to continue his stud—"

"Victoria, dear, the story!" interrupted the student of conditions and the spouse of Victoria. She frowned at the interruption, but obeyed the hint.

"Well, as I was saying, I sat down in the outermost of our group of chairs, which happened to be next that of an American traveler—a woman with the most amazing pronunciation—"

"Pennsylvania 'r,'" elucidated Mrs. Henderson.

"And the most remarkable clothes," pursued Mrs. Larrabee, "I have ever encountered. However, I did not waste much time upon these peculiarities. For we had exchanged only a few words when she fumbled under her rug for something, and drew forth—my bag! She was looking for a handkerchief, and as she opened the bag to pull it out I said: 'I beg your pardon, but may I look at your bag?' She turned red, and stared at me rather queerly, and for a second I thought that maybe, in some way, she might have been the thief—"

"Whereas," explained Mrs. Henderson purringly, "it was soon apparent that she merely thought our dear Mrs. Larrabee a peculiarly bold and bare-faced thief who was going to snatch her possessions from her then and there."

"After we cleared up that," continued the narrator, "she allowed me to look at it. There was no mistake; it was my bag, seal sapphire and all. I told her the circumstances of my losing it, and asked to know when and how she had obtained it. At first she seemed very reluctant to tell me—acted really most suspiciously. But her husband, to whom she appealed, was a man of some sense; he told her that she was laying herself open to the most unpleasant surmises by her attitude, and that it was much less disgraceful to be known as a patron of pawnbrokers' sales than to be suspected of being a receiver of stolen goods. And that, of course, showed us the reason for her secretiveness; she buys jewelry and knickknacks at pawnbrokers' sales—fancy! And she had bought my bag the middle of last July at a pawn-

broker's sale in Jersey City while she was waiting to take the steamer over—they were trippers, she and her husband, six-week tours of the Continent. She finally consented to give it up to me, my husband—foolishly, I think—insisting upon my paying her the amount that she had given for the thing. She was going home to—what was the amazing name of the place she was going to, dear?"

"Alleghany," supplied Mrs. Henderson.

"Yes, Alleghany. She was going home to Alleghany, and she signed this affidavit"—Mrs. Larrabee waved before their eyes the paper she had taken from the bag—"when we landed. And I went immediately—with a detective, a Pinkerton; I was disgusted with the stupidity of those I employed last summer—to the pawnbroker's in Jersey City to corroborate her story and to find if there were any traces of the missing ring and the other things. He proved to be a sort of clearing house for pawned things, but he gave us the name and address of the man from whom he had had the bag, and we went there. There we learned that the bag had been pawned by a woman with whom the man had had some slight former dealings last summer a few days after I lost the bag. The black pearl was also pawned at the same time. He had received no interest on the loan for over a year; he had not seen the woman again—he kept calling her 'the lady,' but he was a nasty little person who couldn't have recognized a lady had he seen one. Of course, the name and address she gave him were fictitious. And at the close of the year he had turned it in to be sold at an auction this other man—Markovitz—was having. And there you are!"

They looked at one another, a little dazed by the march of the coincidence. Anna Fielding and her husband stared at each other. Had Amy Ghent, after all— And now she was married to John! But—there were other possibilities. The thought of them strengthened Anna's voice as she said:

"I see your point, of course, Mrs.

Larrabee. If one of my servants took the bag, she might have pawned it in Jersey City, or might have had it pawned there. But—if some one else took it; if—Mrs. Henderson's chauffeur, for example—"

"It never was poor Lemoine!" interrupted Lemoine's employer.

"Or any one who picked it up from the roadside—it would have been just as easy for that person to pawn it in Jersey City as for my suppositiously guilty servant," Anna finished.

"Of course, it's nothing to me," replied Mrs. Larrabee, shrugging her shoulders. "I've got the bag, though I had to pay something to get it. I've my ring again—the police forced the little wretch to give it back to me. But I should think it wise of you—I should even go so far as to think it your duty—to see the man and let him have a chance to pick out the pawnier of that bag if she is a member of your household. You owe it not only to yourself, but to your future guests."

"She sounds quite relentlessly right, doesn't she?" observed Mrs. Henderson. "Have you the same servants, by the way, Mrs. Fielding, as you had last year?"

"Entirely the same," replied Anna monotonously.

"Lucky woman!" answered her neighbor lightly.

Anna thought for a second. She struggled with a reluctance that she could not explain to herself. She hated the thought of the identification farce; of course, the pawnbroker would not recognize the pawnier of the stolen bag among any whom she could marshal before him for inspection; were not both the suspects far away? Clarice Tenney—Derwent—whatever the girl's real name was, she reflected impatiently, and Amy Ghent—Amy Hopkinson now!—they were far away, and safe enough. As for the bovine crowd she could array before him—dull, good, honest souls, more careful of their honesty than of any other possession—among them he would strike none whom he could damn for all time with his knowledge.

"If you will give me the man's name and address," she said, "I will communicate with him at once. You are right, of course. It will be the simplest way of settling the matter once for all, as far as our servants are concerned. I'll telephone him," she added feverishly. Now that she had decided on her course, she was burning with impatience to be about it.

"Well, you Americans certainly are—what do you call it?—hustlers when you are once started," admitted Mrs. Larrabee. "You'll let me hear how it comes out, won't you? I shall be so interested."

"Yes, indeed. Can't you come yourself—you and Mrs. Henderson—to the inquisition? I'll tell the man to-morrow afternoon. What is his name? Robinski—" She murmured the address as she copied it.

"I can't come, thank you. Mr. Larrabee and I go on to-night to Lawrence. He wants to be an actual witness of one of the big new labor riots."

"And we're off for Tuxedo for a few days," said Mrs. Henderson. "But you'll surely let us know, won't you?"

"Surely," replied Anna gayly. And then Baum brought the tea, and Mrs. Larrabee discoursed about labor conditions as her husband had found them. And he occasionally supplied a grave correction. And Anna Fielding tried in the midst of conversation to read her own mind. Was she relieved that Amy Ghent was not here to be the victim of a horrible recognition? Or was she sorry? And, anyway, and after all, was it not more likely to have been Clarice, the beloved of her son? Nothing would be cleared by the farcical performance of the morrow, for Mr. Robinski, caught on the long-distance telephone by Baum, and interrogated by Eustace, had replied that he would come on the next afternoon to oblige Mrs. Fielding, adding airily that he would run over in his car, as a Westchester motor trip would be pleasant at the season—to Eustace's unreasonable anger. And, all arrangements made, Anna sighed in some relief; at least, obscure as the matter would remain, she would have

acceded to the demands of the sufferer; she would be rid of the affair.

CHAPTER IX.

To the servants that morning Mrs. Fielding was the great lady coming down to that delightfully democratic plane of human relationship where favors are asked as well as bestowed. She asked Hannah and Baum and all her household staff to do her a service not nominated in the bond of their engagement; she explained to them that it was to satisfy no suspicion of her own that she made the plea, but to rid herself of the importunities of outsiders. In short, though not in plain words, she requested that they would aid her in clearing her house of a suspicion. Anna was tactful when she chose to be; perhaps her tact was more successfully used with her social inferiors—persons not too critical in their views of diplomacy, not too questioning of all friendly overtures—than with other people. This morning, at any rate, it was gloriously triumphant. The whole body of servants felt that the peace and, to a certain extent, the reputation of their employers' house were in their hands, and they generously agreed to save them.

Mr. Robinski, faithful to his agreement, steamed noisily up through the grounds of Penfield a little after luncheon. Within five minutes it had been necessary for Mr. Fielding to assure him that his time and effort were regarded by the family as worthy of compensation, and to listen to the history of his purchase of the little car that he ran.

"Very interesting," commented Eustace curtly, when the recital had at last been cut short. "But we will not detain you to tell us anything further. The servants—they are the ones we have had for several years—will come into the library, pass through it, and out into another room. If you should by any strange chance recognize one of them as your customer, you will please give no sign until the procession has finished. Then you can tell me. But I

anticipate no such outcome of the investigation. It is really a little farcical, to my mind."

Mr. Robinski opined that you never could tell, and that the employer who relied upon the honesty of his servants was relying upon a broken reed. Then he added an easy word or two of approval of Penfield, and asked, in confidential fashion, at how much Mr. Fielding valued it. The eminent novelist, perturbed by the necessity for action in fields foreign to his tastes, took off his glasses, rubbed them, replaced them, surveyed his interlocutor through them with a look that bespoke repulsion, and then answered: "My home is not for sale, sir."

"Ah, well, you've got a good property here when you get ready to sell," flatteringly averred the unabashed Mr. Robinski. Then they went into the library, where Anna awaited them, nervous and agitated in spite of herself.

As they entered the library the telephone rang. Mr. Fielding answered it.

Anna heard his "Too bad; take a station hack." Then he hung up the receiver, and, in answer to Anna's upraised brows, said: "Stasia—unmet. Said she couldn't raise the garage."

"Oh, of course. I thought she wasn't coming until to-morrow."

Mr. Robinski, with a happy air of intimacy with Cordova leather, passed an approving hand over Eustace's pet chair before sitting down in it at the head of the library table. He offered Mr. Fielding a gold-banded cigar as that gentleman seated himself at one side of the same table. Mr. Fielding declined it ill-humoredly.

Hannah was the first to enter the audience chamber and to pass before the tribunal. She glared vitriolically at the pawnbroker, who was puffing blue rings into the air, but looking out sharply enough from among them.

"Little lemon tart!" commented Mr. Robinski merrily when the door had closed upon her. "But she wasn't any one I ever saw before."

One by one they came, some pale with fright in spite of the conscious-

ness of innocence, some giggling over a lark. The menservants followed after the women; perhaps Robinski might recognize one of them as a customer, and thus claim the right to look over his female relatives later. But the men, too, passed unscathed beneath the pawnbroker's watchful eyes.

"No," he said regretfully at the end of the ceremony, "I haven't ever seen one of them before, to the best of my knowledge. Certainly there ain't none of them the one that left the bag with me. Say!" he cried, with sudden happy inspiration. "Have you ever missed anything else? I could tell you what else the same young woman had left with me from time to time before—only she always redeemed them."

"We have lost nothing else, and need detain you no longer," said Eustace briefly. He had almost handed Mr. Robinski his motoring coat in his eagerness to get rid of the antipathetic presence.

"There was a necklace that was a beaut!" reminisced Mr. Robinski, fondling his cap slowly, and dwelling lovingly upon his memory of the necklace. "An old-fashioned one, but good stones—pearls an' emeralds. But she redeemed that."

"What kind of a necklace did you say?" demanded Anna sharply.

"Pearls and emeralds—nice stones, too, but not chick an' up to date in the settin'. Why, ma'am," Robinski's face sharpened like a fox's, "had you anything of that sort?"

"No," answered Anna incisively. "I thought you said rubies. I was not attending. Rubies and rose diamonds, I thought you said. I have a necklace like that. We need detain you no longer." She looked appealingly at her husband, whose eyes were fixed with amazement upon her. But he responded promptly to her appeal for help for riddance from this pest.

"No, we need not keep you longer. Twenty-five dollars I believe you said, Mr. Robinski? Here you are. You were very kind to take so much trouble. I"—he forced himself to be courteous—"I will see you to your car. I fancy

the servants are not yet recovered from their upsetting experience."

They all moved together into the hall. At the front door stood the driver of the station hack, carrying Stasia's bag. Stasia, tall, brown, sumptuous even in the severity of her tailored traveling frock and toque, stood beside him.

"Oh, there you are!" she cried cheerfully from the other side of the fastened copper screening that debarred her entrance. "What's happened to the house? Why is there no one on duty? I've been ringing quite fi—" She encountered the surprised stare of Robinski full upon her. She broke off abruptly, staring at him with slowly whitening face, with slowly dilating eyes. "Five minutes," she finished then, when the stare of recognition passed.

"Why," cried Robinski jubilantly, "why, here we are! Here's the young woman herself!"

CHAPTER X.

In after years—when the form that Anna Fielding's occasional nightmare always wore was the face of a devil, grinning triumphantly, with Robinski's cigar in its mouth and Robinski's motor cap upon its head; and beside it her daughter's, white, frightened, discovered—in those after years there was always one thing that comforted her. It was that even in the dazed moment of her horror, of her disbelief, of her utter overthrow, she perceived and believed in her husband's power to cope with the dreadful situation. While she stood clinging to the back of a hall chair with fingers that bore for days the cruel marks of the carving, wondering if the hideous moment was to last forever, all of them petrified for eternity in their poses, suddenly the horrid spell was broken. Eustace seemed to take Robinski easily by the elbow, seemed to steer him out of the house, seemed to speak to Stasia and the hackman with his accustomed air. Afterward she learned that he had indeed said lightly to Stasia: "We were not looking for you so soon; go in; I'll join you in a moment," and that he had

firmly guided the reluctant pawnbroker toward the automobile standing in the shelter of a rhododendron clump at one side of the driveway. And that to that gentleman's "So it was a friend, an' not a servant! So it was a visitor—a tony one, too!" he had answered: "You have grasped the situation, Mr. Robinski." And to that gentleman's further comment, delivered with his finger against his nose, "Mum's the word, eh?" Eustace had further replied: "Mum's the word!" and had helped to spell the word with a fifty-dollar bill. That he—her husband, for whom she had "managed" for so many years—her husband, whom she was wont to half despise in her heart as inept, unready in emergencies—that he should have got rid of the man with no further words seemed to her then, and always seemed to her thereafter, a wonderful feat.

Eustace had returned swiftly to the house, passing the departing station hack as he did so. Anna was still standing where he had left her, still clinging to the back of the great hall chair. Stasia had flung herself on an old oak bench opposite, and her face was hidden by her gloved hands.

"Come up to my study," Eustace had said. And Anna, whose dulled wits had suggested to her no better procedure than a "scene," a haughty cross-questioning of her daughter, a parental anathema, was amazed at the gentleness of his voice. Stasia's hands came down at the sound; she looked at him with wild, unbelieving appeal and hope in her great eyes. And she arose obediently, and swayed toward the stairway. He came over to where Anna stood, and took her gently by the hand. He kissed her cold, white cheek. "My poor love!" he said tenderly. And she clung to him closely, as a child clings to a strong hand in the unknown dark.

His big study ran the whole length of the top story. The embers of the little fire by which he had worked that morning were faintly red in the ashes on the hearth. He put a stick of wood above them, patiently blew them into flame with a pair of bellows, and then

pulled a chair for Anna before the blaze. There was a bottle of sherry in the little cupboard in the chimney breast, and he poured her a glass of it and made her swallow it before he turned to Stasia. And still the girl's stricken, wondering eyes found his eyes kind.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly, the words torn from her, it seemed. "Oh, I swear I never realized what it would mean to you!" She threw her hat across the room; she sat down, brushing her dark hair back from her forehead as if it hurt her. "I swear it—father—mother!"

"Oh!" cried Anna, in sudden bitterness. "Tell us the story—tell us what it means—before you begin to talk about your feelings."

The younger woman's face hardened, but broke again at the kindness of her father's: "Yes, Stasia, tell us what it means."

"That is reasonable," she replied. "I'll try to tell you. I took the creature's bag and pawned it in order to be able to give Beverly Moore some money that he needed. I had often pawned little things of my own for the same purpose—I'd been doing it for years."

"Beverly!" cried Anna, aghast. "You—you—"

The girl laughed bitterly. "I was his friend, his cousin, his comrade, with whom he was on the same terms as with a man chum. There was no 'mine' and 'thine' in the relation. What was mine was Beverly's; what was his was mine—that was the theory—only Beverly had nothing, and I had a good deal."

"But—pawning—why, child, you had your grandfather's legacy! How much did Beverly want of you—"

Stasia drew a check, pink and crisp, from her bag. She opened it slowly, and she said:

"What he had from me was twenty-three thousand four hundred and eighty-five dollars. He has just paid it back. I don't know how much he may have wanted. He has had in the last seven or eight years—since I came into

control of grandfather's money—all that."

"The vile young scoundrel!" It was Eustace who spoke. "And what did he do with the money?"

"Paid debts with it, I suppose. Gambling debts largely. He speculated a good deal in a little way—the first money was to protect his margins on some stock that was sure to go up if he only had enough to save his shares. And the next was a joint investment for both of us in something that was going to make poor old Talty's five per cent investments look ridiculous. That went, of course. And—well, when he found he had a bank that was going to honor his demands at all hazards, he got it on every sort of pretense. I dare say the money I raised on that—that horrid bag—paid his tailor's bill. He had confided to me that he was being hounded to death by duns, all for the want of a beggarly couple of hundreds. And I had told him I would get them for him by the next day. And then—there lay the accursed, glittering thing in your room, mother. And I hadn't any very valuable jewelry that wouldn't be missed—I had pawned my pearl and emerald necklace only a little while before for him—and—oh, I don't know why I did it! But I did. I knew she was sailing the next day, and I didn't realize the sapphire seal or the black pearl inside. I thought—oh, that I would have lots of chance to redeem it before there was a hue and cry about it. And that she would fume a little, and then have a good mystery story for years in its unexplained restoration. I reckoned without the excellent Mrs. Larrabee."

"But," cried poor, bewildered Anna, "the silver, the attempted robbery—"

"Don't you see?" Stasia spoke with a sort of impatience. "When the hue and cry was made that very afternoon I grew obstinate. I had hidden the thing in my fishing boots. And I determined to go ahead with my plan—to borrow her old bag for as long as I needed it. But then you suspected that poor sweetheart of Hop's, mother, and I felt thrown out of all my reckoning.

I couldn't have you go on in your mind making her—poor, shabby, hurt little person!—guilty of my crime. But I couldn't tell you the truth. So—it was a plant of mine, that silver affair, rather a stupid one, it seems to me now. I thought I could arrange things so that it would appear that a burglary had been attempted at Penfield. Very well; a burglary would presuppose burglars in the neighborhood. What more likely than that one of them had sneaked into the house under cover of the confusion of the storm that day, had snatched Mrs. Larrabee's bag, and had been frightened away too soon to gather up anything more? So I planted the silver which you were all to suppose the burglarious one had returned to get; and then dear Miss Amy, who was sleeping lightly and nervously—all the thief talk had, of course, gotten her on edge with the recollection of her Chicago experience—she heard the noise, and went down to investigate. And—well, that brilliant performance only made hideous trouble and confusion for her. So I gave up trying to clear any one. And there you have it all—except—her voice fell, her chin sank upon her breast—"except truly I never thought what it would mean to you and mother, father. I don't know why. I suppose because I never thought of any one except—Beverly—in those days."

There was a long, heart-breaking silence. Anna felt that she must not speak until her husband had given her the cue—she was shattered into a strange humility. Eustace looked out through the window at the end of the room, pity and remorse, as well as pain, upon his face. By and by he sighed.

"Anna, dear," he said, "will you tell our daughter that we love her—that we don't know just where, through what ignorance or carelessness, we were at fault, but that we know we must have been. Tell her, dear, the one important thing—that our hearts are not closed to her. Tell her as only a woman can tell it. And by and by we'll arrange the less important, practical details of the affair."

Anna's bright eyes were drenched in

tears at her husband's words and tone. She put out her arms toward Stasia.

"Oh, my poor child!" she cried. "My poor child!" And Stasia, with a sob, hid her face against her mother's breast.

EPILOGUE.

If it were possible for poor human beings to live continuously upon the plane of their few best, their few great, moments, the Fielding family would have presented a totally changed appearance to the world for the rest of its existence. Stasia, of course, after a public confession to all who had heard of the loss of Mrs. Larrabee's bag, would have made restitution, and would then have devoted her energies to the uplifting of poor girls who were in divers ways the victims of their own ignorance of life, their folly, or their affections. Mrs. Fielding would have reasoned out to a logical conclusion the vague thoughts she had connecting the filial pretense and hypocrisy of which she was guilty as a Hopkinson with the more serious dishonesty of her daughter; she would have followed to their inevitable ending her misgivings about the value of the ambitions she had pursued to the neglect of intimate companionship with her children; she would have learned to distrust utterly the rôle of family providence, of family manager, which she had assumed all her life, and would have sought only to know the tendencies of her children and her husband, and to guide them as wisely as human ignorance might guide, instead of trying to coerce them into the paths of her desires. And Eustace would have always been at his best, gifted with the greatest gift of the imaginative man—sympathetic understanding.

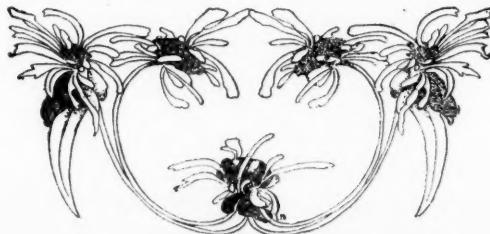
But if poor human nature were capable of remaining upon the high plane of its few great moments the millennium would be here for all the world as well as for Penfield. As it is, Penfield is merely a little better for all that it knew and suffered in those hard days. But it is a little better.

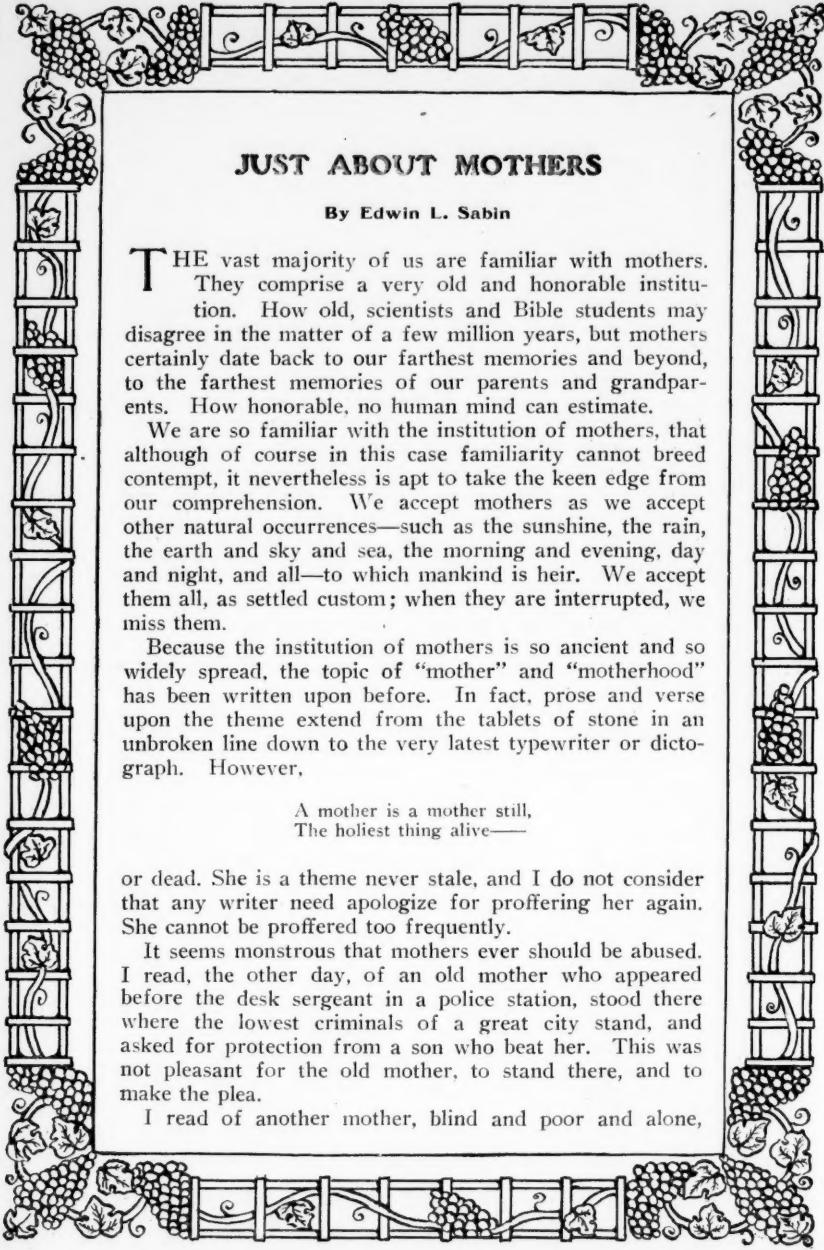
For instance, Clarice Derwent was

entreathed in due form by a dignified elderly lady, whose cheeks were paler than Clarice remembered them, and whose eyes were red-rimmed with tears, to marry Hopkinson. Clarice was told by Stasia herself why no suspicion attached to her any longer. So was Amy Hopkinson, who replied by a telegram that overspilled all the limits of day and night letters, and insisted upon Stasia's coming at once to the ranch—a wonderful place, in which, it appeared, cures of every kind were wrought—physical, mental, and spiritual. Mr. Larrabee was informed by Mr. Fielding that it had been discovered that the theft of Mrs. Larrabee's bag was the work of a member of the family, doubtless acting under a temporary aberration of mind; and he was requested to send to Mr. Fielding all bills for detective service, for redemption of the bag, and in short for all moneys that had been expended in the matter; and Mr. Larrabee obliged Mr. Fielding with the bills and a polite note which intimated that such temporary aberrations were likely to happen in any one's family, and which added that the matter was now, for both Mrs. Larrabee and himself, a permanently sealed chapter. And the gates of Penfield were closed upon the Beverly Moores, the gentleman in the case being given to understand that his discovered financial dealings with a daughter of the house debarred him from entrance even though his mercenary marriage had enabled him to pay his indebtedness; and Mrs. Moore accepting contentedly for a half year her husband's explanation that "poor old Stasia couldn't carry it off any longer; she had been—though he hated to say

such a caddish thing—pretty hard hit by his marriage." After the half year, however, Mrs. Moore, who was beginning to revise her views on many questions, somewhat doubted this explanation. But she had also learned the value of silence as to suspicions, and she said nothing.

There is no loss to which men do not, after a fashion, accustom themselves. There is no shock to which, if we survive it, we do not eventually accommodate ourselves. Men lose their arms, their legs, their hearing of earth's sounds, their sight of its wonders, the dear companionship of their loves, and they go on living cheerfully, normally after a while. So at Penfield the family, robbed of its assurance, its pride, its wholesome belief in itself, by and by found itself jogging along the familiar ways with the first pain, the first bewilderment and anguish, mysteriously gone, mysteriously transmuted into the fabric of everyday life. Even Stasia by and by forgot to feel herself abnormal, set apart; even she, thanks in part to Amy Hopkinson, who had come triumphantly whole through her own maiming trial, grew finally able to look the world again in the face—even the close, intimate world of her home; grew able to believe in herself, to feel the power of her new self, and only to pity, no longer to dread, the poor, weak, passionately loving thing she had once been. There is but one supreme trial from which she shrinks in the future—yet feels a hope in the midst of her terror. It is the trial of telling the man who has a right to know—her Uncle John's partner—the story, and awaiting his verdict upon it.





JUST ABOUT MOTHERS

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE vast majority of us are familiar with mothers. They comprise a very old and honorable institution. How old, scientists and Bible students may disagree in the matter of a few million years, but mothers certainly date back to our farthest memories and beyond, to the farthest memories of our parents and grandparents. How honorable, no human mind can estimate.

We are so familiar with the institution of mothers, that although of course in this case familiarity cannot breed contempt, it nevertheless is apt to take the keen edge from our comprehension. We accept mothers as we accept other natural occurrences—such as the sunshine, the rain, the earth and sky and sea, the morning and evening, day and night, and all—to which mankind is heir. We accept them all, as settled custom; when they are interrupted, we miss them.

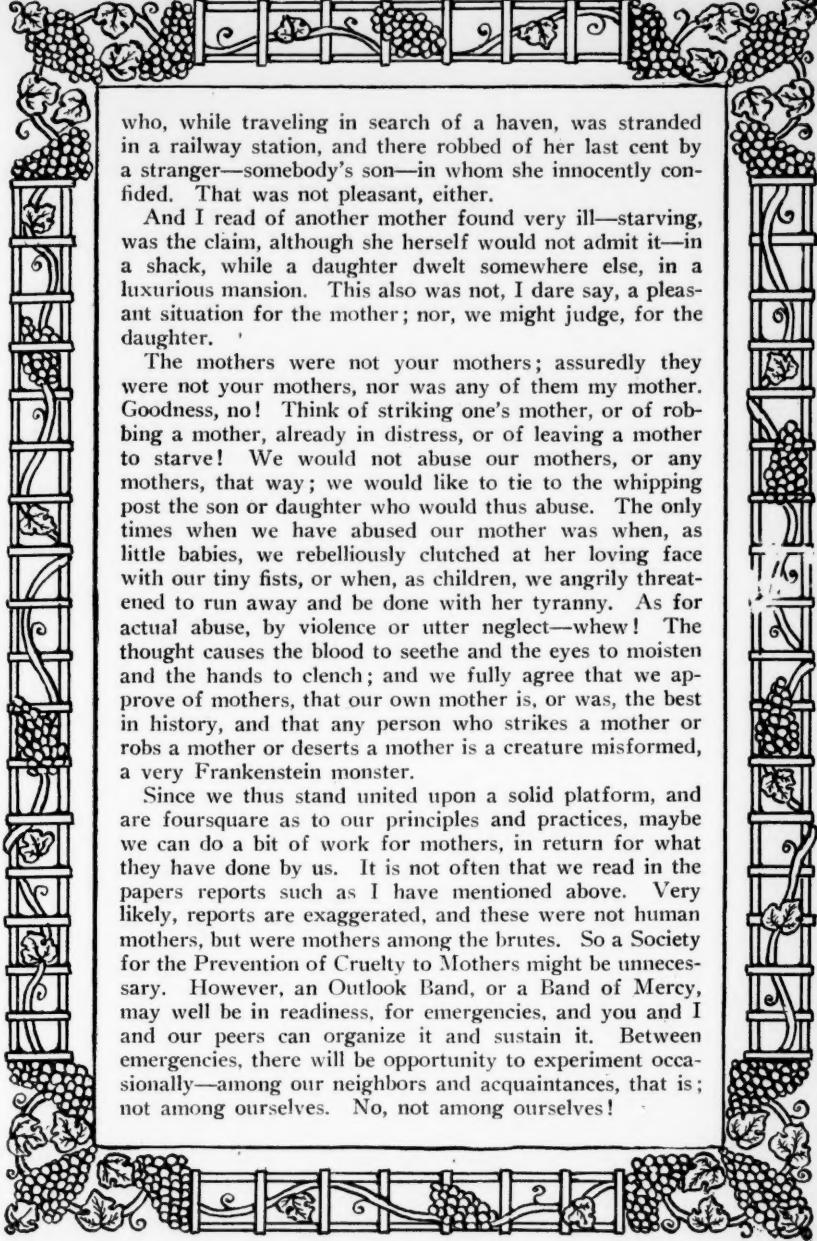
Because the institution of mothers is so ancient and so widely spread, the topic of "mother" and "motherhood" has been written upon before. In fact, prose and verse upon the theme extend from the tablets of stone in an unbroken line down to the very latest typewriter or dictograph. However,

A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive—

or dead. She is a theme never stale, and I do not consider that any writer need apologize for proffering her again. She cannot be proffered too frequently.

It seems monstrous that mothers ever should be abused. I read, the other day, of an old mother who appeared before the desk sergeant in a police station, stood there where the lowest criminals of a great city stand, and asked for protection from a son who beat her. This was not pleasant for the old mother, to stand there, and to make the plea.

I read of another mother, blind and poor and alone,

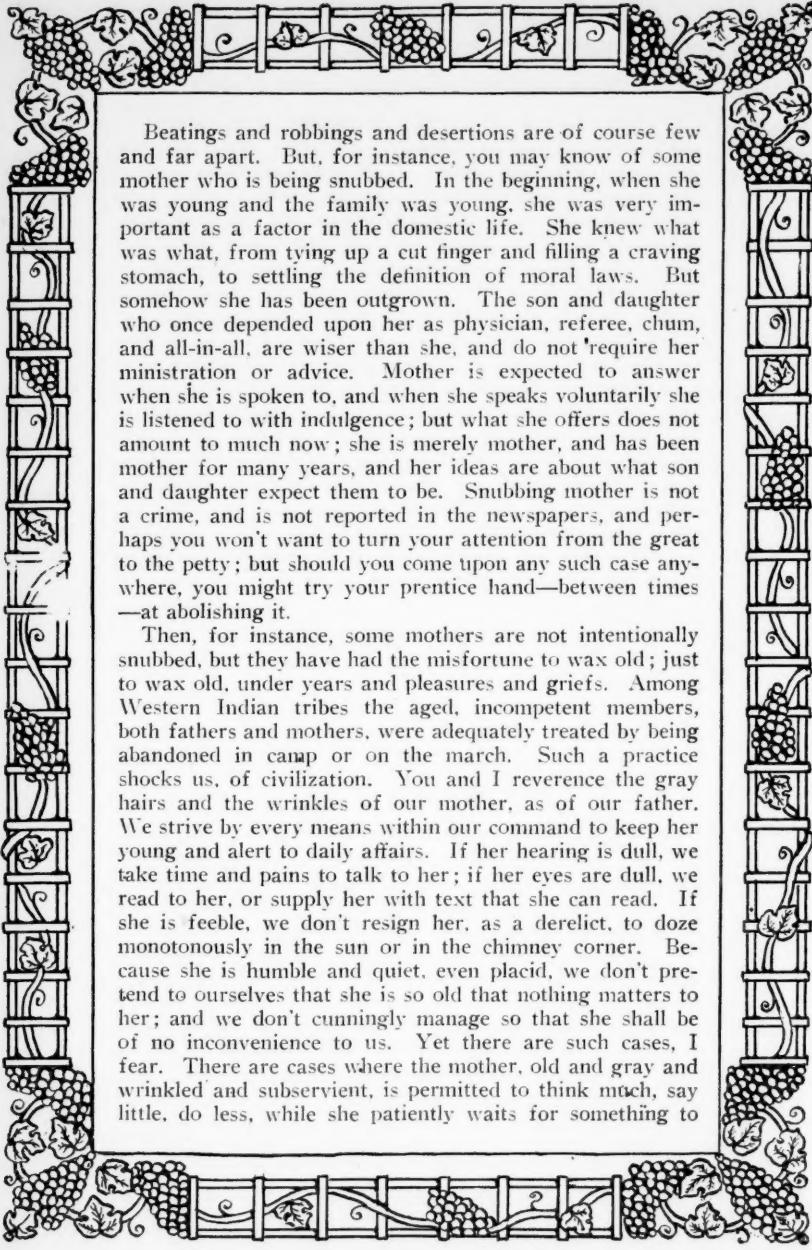


who, while traveling in search of a haven, was stranded in a railway station, and there robbed of her last cent by a stranger—somebody's son—in whom she innocently confided. That was not pleasant, either.

And I read of another mother found very ill—starving, was the claim, although she herself would not admit it—in a shack, while a daughter dwelt somewhere else, in a luxurious mansion. This also was not, I dare say, a pleasant situation for the mother; nor, we might judge, for the daughter.

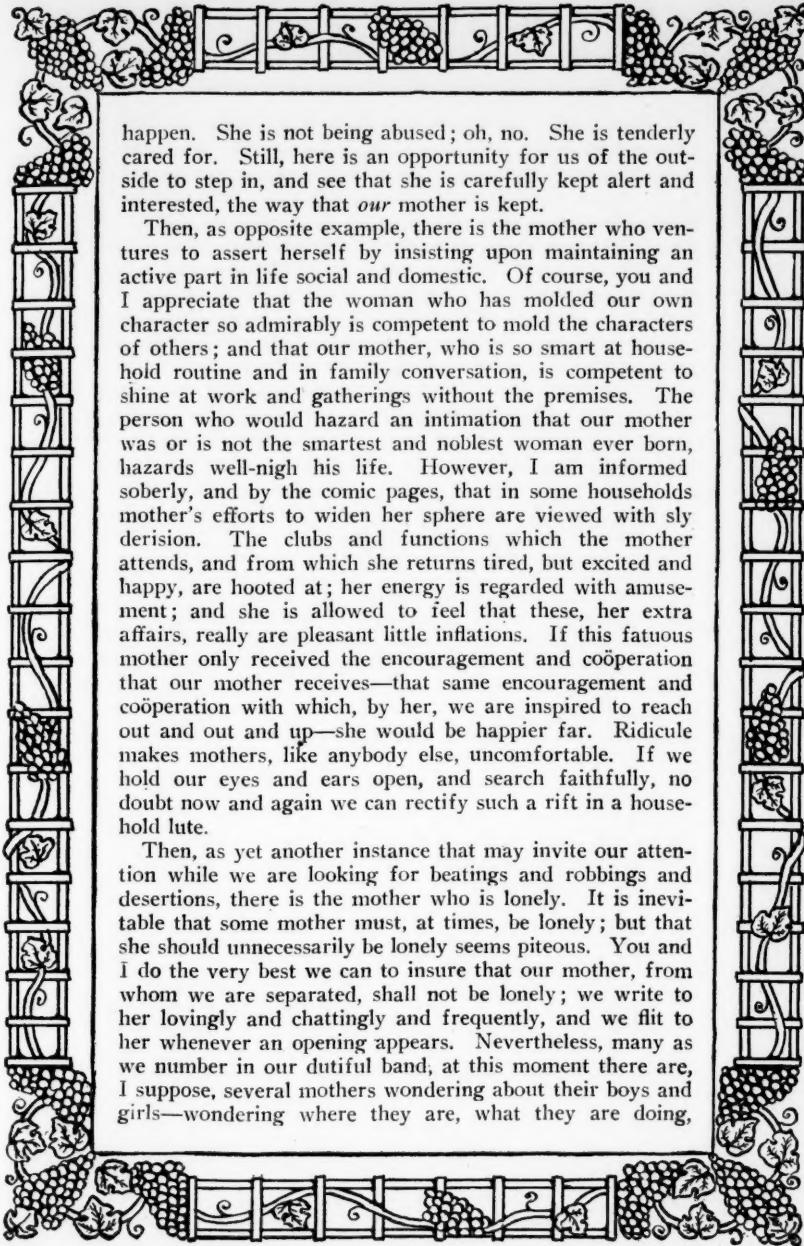
The mothers were not your mothers; assuredly they were not your mothers, nor was any of them my mother. Goodness, no! Think of striking one's mother, or of robbing a mother, already in distress, or of leaving a mother to starve! We would not abuse our mothers, or any mothers, that way; we would like to tie to the whipping post the son or daughter who would thus abuse. The only times when we have abused our mother was when, as little babies, we rebelliously clutched at her loving face with our tiny fists, or when, as children, we angrily threatened to run away and be done with her tyranny. As for actual abuse, by violence or utter neglect—whew! The thought causes the blood to seethe and the eyes to moisten and the hands to clench; and we fully agree that we approve of mothers, that our own mother is, or was, the best in history, and that any person who strikes a mother or robs a mother or deserts a mother is a creature misformed, a very Frankenstein monster.

Since we thus stand united upon a solid platform, and are foursquare as to our principles and practices, maybe we can do a bit of work for mothers, in return for what they have done by us. It is not often that we read in the papers reports such as I have mentioned above. Very likely, reports are exaggerated, and these were not human mothers, but were mothers among the brutes. So a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Mothers might be unnecessary. However, an Outlook Band, or a Band of Mercy, may well be in readiness, for emergencies, and you and I and our peers can organize it and sustain it. Between emergencies, there will be opportunity to experiment occasionally—among our neighbors and acquaintances, that is; not among ourselves. No, not among ourselves!



Beatings and Robbins and desertions are of course few and far apart. But, for instance, you may know of some mother who is being snubbed. In the beginning, when she was young and the family was young, she was very important as a factor in the domestic life. She knew what was what, from tying up a cut finger and filling a craving stomach, to settling the definition of moral laws. But somehow she has been outgrown. The son and daughter who once depended upon her as physician, referee, chum, and all-in-all, are wiser than she, and do not require her ministration or advice. Mother is expected to answer when she is spoken to, and when she speaks voluntarily she is listened to with indulgence; but what she offers does not amount to much now; she is merely mother, and has been mother for many years, and her ideas are about what son and daughter expect them to be. Snubbing mother is not a crime, and is not reported in the newspapers, and perhaps you won't want to turn your attention from the great to the petty; but should you come upon any such case anywhere, you might try your prentice hand—between times—at abolishing it.

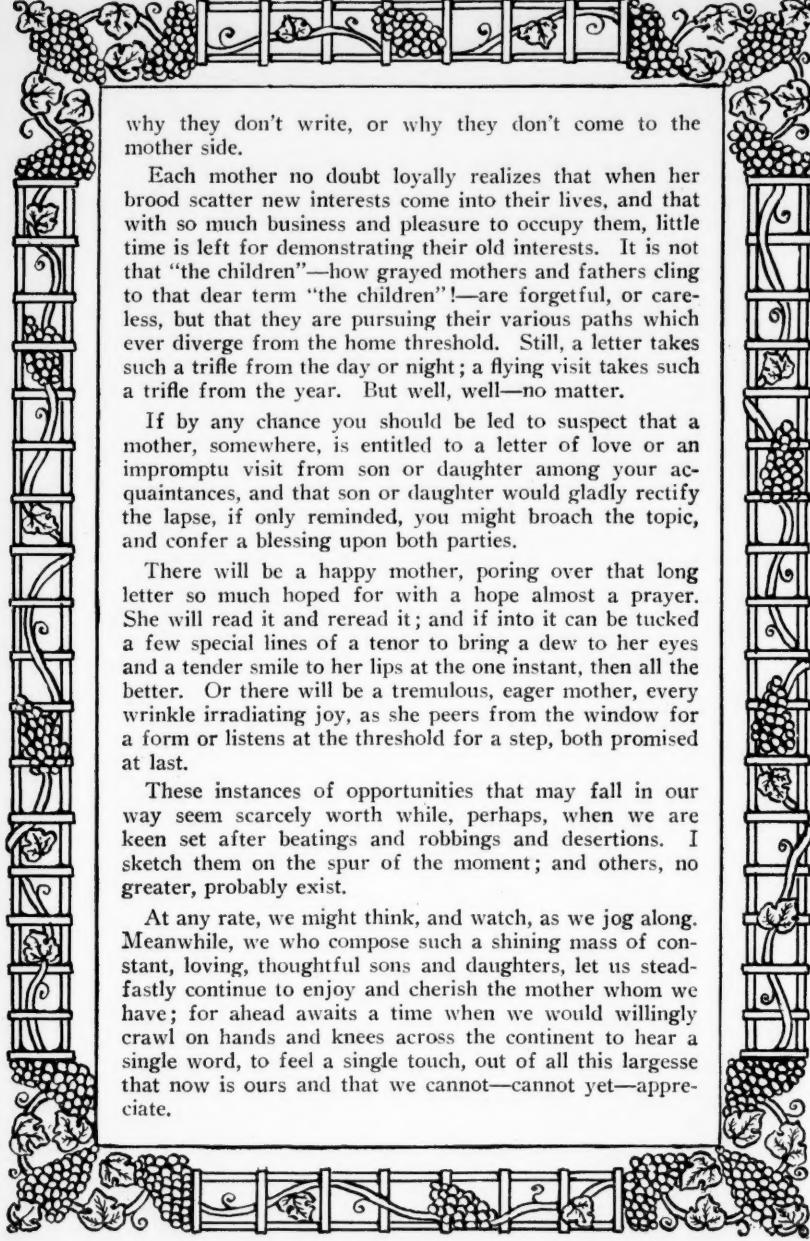
Then, for instance, some mothers are not intentionally snubbed, but they have had the misfortune to wax old; just to wax old, under years and pleasures and griefs. Among Western Indian tribes the aged, incompetent members, both fathers and mothers, were adequately treated by being abandoned in camp or on the march. Such a practice shocks us, of civilization. You and I reverence the gray hairs and the wrinkles of our mother, as of our father. We strive by every means within our command to keep her young and alert to daily affairs. If her hearing is dull, we take time and pains to talk to her; if her eyes are dull, we read to her, or supply her with text that she can read. If she is feeble, we don't resign her, as a derelict, to doze monotonously in the sun or in the chimney corner. Because she is humble and quiet, even placid, we don't pretend to ourselves that she is so old that nothing matters to her; and we don't cunningly manage so that she shall be of no inconvenience to us. Yet there are such cases, I fear. There are cases where the mother, old and gray and wrinkled and subservient, is permitted to think much, say little, do less, while she patiently waits for something to



happen. She is not being abused; oh, no. She is tenderly cared for. Still, here is an opportunity for us of the outside to step in, and see that she is carefully kept alert and interested, the way that *our* mother is kept.

Then, as opposite example, there is the mother who ventures to assert herself by insisting upon maintaining an active part in life social and domestic. Of course, you and I appreciate that the woman who has molded our own character so admirably is competent to mold the characters of others; and that our mother, who is so smart at household routine and in family conversation, is competent to shine at work and gatherings without the premises. The person who would hazard an intimation that our mother was or is not the smartest and noblest woman ever born, hazards well-nigh his life. However, I am informed soberly, and by the comic pages, that in some households mother's efforts to widen her sphere are viewed with sly derision. The clubs and functions which the mother attends, and from which she returns tired, but excited and happy, are hooted at; her energy is regarded with amusement; and she is allowed to feel that these, her extra affairs, really are pleasant little inflations. If this fatuous mother only received the encouragement and coöperation that our mother receives—that same encouragement and coöperation with which, by her, we are inspired to reach out and out and up—she would be happier far. Ridicule makes mothers, like anybody else, uncomfortable. If we hold our eyes and ears open, and search faithfully, no doubt now and again we can rectify such a rift in a household lute.

Then, as yet another instance that may invite our attention while we are looking for beatings and robberies and desertions, there is the mother who is lonely. It is inevitable that some mother must, at times, be lonely; but that she should unnecessarily be lonely seems piteous. You and I do the very best we can to insure that our mother, from whom we are separated, shall not be lonely; we write to her lovingly and chattingly and frequently, and we flit to her whenever an opening appears. Nevertheless, many as we number in our dutiful band, at this moment there are, I suppose, several mothers wondering about their boys and girls—wondering where they are, what they are doing,



why they don't write, or why they don't come to the mother side.

Each mother no doubt loyally realizes that when her brood scatter new interests come into their lives, and that with so much business and pleasure to occupy them, little time is left for demonstrating their old interests. It is not that "the children"—how grayed mothers and fathers cling to that dear term "the children"!—are forgetful, or careless, but that they are pursuing their various paths which ever diverge from the home threshold. Still, a letter takes such a trifle from the day or night; a flying visit takes such a trifle from the year. But well, well—no matter.

If by any chance you should be led to suspect that a mother, somewhere, is entitled to a letter of love or an impromptu visit from son or daughter among your acquaintances, and that son or daughter would gladly rectify the lapse, if only reminded, you might broach the topic, and confer a blessing upon both parties.

There will be a happy mother, poring over that long letter so much hoped for with a hope almost a prayer. She will read it and reread it; and if into it can be tucked a few special lines of a tenor to bring a dew to her eyes and a tender smile to her lips at the one instant, then all the better. Or there will be a tremulous, eager mother, every wrinkle irradiating joy, as she peers from the window for a form or listens at the threshold for a step, both promised at last.

These instances of opportunities that may fall in our way seem scarcely worth while, perhaps, when we are keen set after beatings and robberies and desertions. I sketch them on the spur of the moment; and others, no greater, probably exist.

At any rate, we might think, and watch, as we jog along. Meanwhile, we who compose such a shining mass of constant, loving, thoughtful sons and daughters, let us steadfastly continue to enjoy and cherish the mother whom we have; for ahead awaits a time when we would willingly crawl on hands and knees across the continent to hear a single word, to feel a single touch, out of all this largesse that now is ours and that we cannot—cannot yet—appreciate.

The WHISTLING GIRL



By
MARION
SHORT

Author of "The Boy Soprano," "Old Timbers," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

WEAK ankles did it. They had been weak ever since Trella could remember. Even as a child in the country, she had never lasted long in a game of tag or in skating matches. So it was small wonder that, three days after making her début as salesgirl in Hahler's Popular-price Department Store, her old trouble reasserted itself.

Mr. Hesse, floorwalker for ladies' cloaks, suits, underwear, et cetera, was a gentleman whose formidable pop eyes seemed to take in the whole of a dry-goods section at a glance. Anything off duty or out of place he marked with quick and unerring accuracy. Trella, when she crossed his line of vision that morning, was both off duty and out of place. Oblivious of the fact that a possible customer had stopped to examine a display of "specials" a short distance away, the new employee was making a frantic and partially successful attempt to bridge bodily the space between the counter in front of her and the lingerie-laden shelves behind, her aching feet dangling clear of the floor.

A disapproving exclamation point creased the shining forehead of Mr. Hesse.

"You vill shtand, please, Miss Pren-

tice. Iff anybody takes de privilege to sit herself down, it iss de customer, not de saleslady. Odervise it breaks de rules of dis establishment."

Trella gasped, and her number-two pumps struck the floor with an apprehensive thump, maintaining a rigidly proper angle long after the mighty Mr. Hesse had disappeared.

Perhaps, if a lady had not come along just then and stopped by the counter to dally with petticoats, Trella might still be salesgirl in Hahler's lingerie department. Perhaps. The aforementioned lady examined the stock with much leisure and many questions, and, after the obliging Trella had shown her all possible varieties of embroidered and lace-trimmed garments, graciously informed her that she did not wish to buy anything to-day, but was merely putting in her time while a friend made purchases in the grocery department.

Trella, inexperienced, had not yet acquired that fine indifference as to whether wares are disposed of or not that distinguishes the seasoned salesgirl, and her disappointment was marked. She gazed at the mountain of rejected finery with rueful eyes. Her feet begged for a respite, and when the alert floorwalker made another unex-

pected entrance on the scene, he beheld her perched once more like a disobedient bird upon an uneasy roost.

"You are too tired in de constitution for dis establishment," he commented, as he scribbled something with a pencil on the top sheet of a small pad of paper. "I t'ink you better retire from dry goods and apply to be von of dose immovable pictures."

The little slip that he detached from the pad and laid in the salesgirl's un-

her. Yesterday, on reaching the door of their dingy little apartment, she had heard her singing, "There is a happy land, far, far away!" as she used to sing it in those old day when Trella's father was alive, and poverty unknown. It seemed too cruel to be obliged to blight that song in the hour of its resurrection! Clearly the one thing needful, before returning to face that little mother, was to secure the promise of another position.



"You vill shtand, please, Miss Prentice."

willing palm proved to be her graduation certificate from Hahler's. On presenting it at the office, her pay from Monday a. m. until Thursday noon, inclusive, was handed to her.

Trella's first thought, as she started for the street, was a homely, but not unpleasant one: "Thank Heaven, now I can rest my feet!" Then she recalled with a sinking heart how her mother had rejoiced at the prospect of a weekly wage to piece out her own limited earnings as an embroiderer of shirt waists, and what the loss of it would mean to

But it often seemed to be Trella's fortune to make an entirely different move from the one that she had planned. Before reaching the cross-town street that led to another big store similar to Hahler's, she stopped meditatively in front of a vaudeville theater. Not because it was a theater—if it had been a church she would have halted just the same—but because the thought had just struck her that without a reference from her last employer it would be uphill business to convince the next one that she was a capable salesgirl.

She began to look at the photographs of the week's celebrities in the big frames on either side of the long, tiled foyer, but without interest.

A tall, loose-jointed man, in traveling ulster and cap, and a stout young woman who seemed to be all tam-o'-shanter and plaid coat, suddenly and simultaneously appeared from the swing doors of the theater. They halted a few feet from where Trella stood.

"Here, hold my bag, Jim," commanded the girl, in the husky voice of one much addicted to cigarettes, "I want to turn my coat so the plain side'll be out and the plaid side in."

Her lanky partner obeyed.

"What's the matter with it the way you've got it on now?"

"Too gay! I don't feel as frisky as I did—since we've been turned down, I want to look more like I feel."

"Brace up, Clara! We've got a big act, and are sure to get it over somewhere."

"Oh, I don't know, Jim!" She let her mesh bag drag dejectedly along the floor. "These managers make me tired! Last year, when we were working in one, they told us to get a dressy act with three changes of scene, and we'd go great! Now, when we blow in our coin and give 'em the goods, they let us out with, 'Too many big turns already—give us something neat in one!'"

"Ain't it the limit?" conceded the man. "Any cheap skate that can yodel or do any old stunt in front of a drop with his feet on the footlights can get in—but offer 'em something full stage that makes 'em sit up and take notice, and it's the cold world for ours!"

The girl pulled her tam-o'-shanter pensively over one eye.

"It's because we ain't got no pull. And the airs Brown puts on! And him just a song-and-dance man a few years back! You'd think he was the syndicate—the way he acts!"

Her companion gave a cautious backward glance over his shoulder.

"Sh! Brown's just come out and dived into the box office. He might

guess we're knockin' him, and have it in for us."

The provoking cause of the indignation meeting that Trella had just witnessed was a pale-faced man in a gray suit—a curious mixture of gentleman and tough in appearance—who emerged from the box office just as the vaudeville team moved on up the street.

Back in Glen Haven—Trella's home town in beautiful old Connecticut—she had won local fame as a natural whistler, and had even put a few modest dollars into her pocket from concerts in surrounding towns. If "acts in one" were in demand—she didn't know what "in one" meant, unless it meant given by one person—why should not she apply for a hearing just the same as the o'-shantered party in the reversible coat?

"I beg your pardon," she said to the man in gray, spasmodically inserting herself between him and the swing door for which he was heading, "but I'd like to see you about a vaudeville engagement—"

The reply was curt:

"Nothing doing—except by appointment. You have no appointment with me, have you?"

He looked at her as if trying to recall her face.

"N-no," stammered Trella, feeling as if a small green apple had lodged about halfway down her throat, "it just—this minute popped in my head—to—to speak to you—" She hesitated, instinctively standing on one tired foot to rest the other.

Brown gave a glance toward the door, as if contemplating immediate flight.

"But I—I imitate birds," resumed Trella hastily, "the robin—canary—bluebird—whippoorwill—"

The manager's eyes came back to her face, and found it pretty enough to interest him momentarily.

"Where has your act played?" he asked.

"Nowhere much," answered the truthful Trella. "You see, I'm from the country—"

The manager shook his head.

"My dear young lady—if you're just

a raw amateur—you can't expect a hearing in a house like mine."

Desperately, Trella plucked him by the edge of the sleeve as he started to turn away.

"I've whistled in Congregational church entertainments three times in Glen Haven, and in Masonic Hall—"

The man's thin, severe lips limbered into a sarcastic smile.

"This isn't a Congregational church and Glen Haven. It's Broadway and New York."

"Yes, I know," said Trella, nervously working at a rip in her glove until it gaped apart and an agitated finger peered through; "but the country's where you hear birds and learn how they sing—and you can tell whether you warble the way they do or not by listening close—"

"That's true enough," Brown interrupted, more pleasantly. After all, the girl might prove to be a find. "If my stage didn't have a rehearsal—Japanese acrobats"—he continued, "I'd give you a try-out."

"I can come some other time," offered Trella.

"No," said Brown, "I'd rather settle the matter now. Go ahead right here and give me a sample of what you can do."

"Oh—why—but it's almost in the street!" Trella shrank back, dismayed.

"You're ten feet from the sidewalk—no one will notice. Just a hint—the call of a robin, say."

Trella's try-out was upon her. The suddenness of it threw her into a panic. Her mouth felt hot and dry. She ran her tongue along the inside of her upper lip to moisten it. The bird call she emitted was faint and wabbly.

Before she had time to make a second attempt, Brown put up a restraining hand.

"That's more like a chicken with the pip than a robin. Back to Glen Haven for yours. Sorry!"

He touched the brim of his hat and was gone before Trella found breath to say a word. Yet she knew she could whistle, not only well, but extraordinarily well. She could do "The Last

Rose of Summer" with bird notes cunningly introduced, and the same with "Annie Laurie." It seemed to her that she must rush after the elusive manager and tell him so! But in a moment her courage oozed away, and she started for the streets as crestfallen as the vaudeville artists whose defeat had preceded hers. There was no escape. The bad news she must carry home would put a damper on "There is a happy land" for many days to come.

There was a big restaurant next door to Brown's theater. Trella thought she might feel better if she drank a cup of tea. After she had ordered it, her face went into her hands and she began to cry.

"Are you ill, madam?"

Trella looked up and saw a comely young man whose countenance seemed to tell her that she was causing him some slight annoyance. As, indeed, she was. Disconsolate customers—those openly disconsolate, at least—were bad advertisements for the place, and he did not care to harbor them.

Trella dabbed at her damp cheeks with an apologetic handkerchief.

"I did not mean to cry. I'm all right now. I—I just had a business disappointment, and it upset me."

"Well, I guess we all have business troubles when it comes to that," commented her questioner philosophically and more gently, noticing how very blue her eyes were as he spoke. "Take me, for example. I'm the manager here, and you'd think I'd have some authority, wouldn't you?"

Trella nodded affirmatively. She hadn't the faintest idea what he was talking about, but she liked his looks.

"These waiters all seem as peaceful as lambs in the fold," he went on, lowering his voice, "but they may all go on strike any minute, and leave me in the lurch."

"Why, that's too bad!" Trella shook her head and gave a sympathetic little cluck with her tongue. There was something offhand about the manager that reminded her pleasantly of the home boys in Glen Haven. It seemed a positive relief to talk with him.

"But suppose they go on a strike—can't you get others to take their place?" she inquired.

"In time—yes. But I want to hold the old crowd until after the special banquet here to-night. See those long tables over there?" Trella turned and looked. "They've been put in on purpose for a big blow-out. If I turn loose a lot of jays instead of trained hands to wait on the guests—I lose my job."

"But the strike wouldn't be your fault, would it?"

"Of course not. But the proprietor would consider me responsible just the same. He's agreed to give them an answer to-morrow, and thinks I ought to hold them on that. Consequently, Jaynes—he's the strike leader—may send some one around any minute to give the signal that calls them out."

"But can't you prevent his giving the signal somehow?" she asked, reaching surreptitiously under her hat to pull a curly lock or two becomingly about her ears. "Why don't you?"

"I'd like to," exclaimed the young chap, gritting his teeth, "seeing that it means I walk out, too, if they do."

"Well, I hope that won't happen," said Trella.

Her frank interest pleased the manager. His brown eyes dwelt on her blue ones for a pleasant, lingering moment.

"You're from the country, aren't you?" he inquired.

"Yes, Connecticut," said Trella, dimpling. "How did you guess?"

"Perhaps because I'm from the country myself," he answered. "My dad's a farmer near Melville, Massachusetts. Excuse me just a minute."

He stepped away to settle some small dispute at the cashier's desk. Trella suddenly remembered her tea. What were good-looking young men to her? She must not waste a minute more talk-

ing with this one as she had been doing. With the little mother there at home bending over those wearisome waists—

"What was your business disappointment, may I ask?"

He was back at her side before her cup was half emptied. He picked up a menu card and, for the benefit of onlookers, assumed the air of discussing it with her.



"Are you ill, madam?"

"I tried to get into vaudeville—next door—and couldn't," she said briefly.

"You're an actress?" He looked his surprise.

"Oh, no! I'm just as country as I seem. I warble—imitate a few birds and things—but I was so scared I fell down—and Mr. Brown said—"

"Oh," the young man broke in wonderingly, "you got hold of Brown himself? That's unusual. Letter of introduction?"

"No, just walked up and spoke to him. Why, do you know him?"

"Rather. He's the owner of this restaurant. The man who pays my salary—until I've saved enough to start a place of my own some day in Massachusetts." He smiled confidently. Trella liked him better than ever.

"Too bad you couldn't have pleased him, Miss—Miss—"

"Prentice," supplied Trella shyly, "I—I don't know your name, either."

"Baker. Milton S. Baker." He looked at her squares of toast still untouched. "I mustn't spoil your lunch," he said considerately, "but I'll speak to you again before you go—if you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind," said Trella, pleased.

"I want to know more about those imitations," he explained.

As Trella took another sip of the fragrant golden tea, her spirits began to rise. With such kind people in the world as Mr. Milton S. Baker, life seemed again worth living somehow, and the future less perplexing. His kind eyes almost banished the memory of those cold ones that had frozen her into failure. She meant to try for a vaudeville appearance again. She would not permit the next manager to frighten her as Brown had done. She was certain that it was nothing but fright that had caused her to falter. To prove it to herself, she pursed her lips, meaning to whistle softly, oh, very softly, indeed—no louder than a baby robin under its mother's wing! But then, Trella was always doing what she had not meant to do. For a moment after she sent out the loud and penetrating bird call she was afraid to look up. People could not understand that it was an accident, a miscalculation; they would think her an amiable lunatic at the very least! But when she finally summoned courage to peep from under her hat brim, no one seemed to be regarding her at all. Instead, she perceived that every one's attention was centered on the waiters. There were signs of unusual excitement among them. Guests were deserted, half-emptied trays left stand-

ing here and there, aprons untied and flung unceremoniously across chairs or left wilting on the floor, while their owners gathered in a buzzing bunch in the middle of the room. Then, as if by common consent, the apronless ones disappeared like a flock of black sheep through a large door at the rear of the restaurant, leaving in charge only the boy at the hat stand, the cashier, a window washer, and Mr. Milton S. Baker.

"It came from over here somewhere," Trella heard the manager exclaim excitedly. He rushed toward her table as he spoke. "Can you point out the person?" he demanded, with a fierce and suspicious glance at the occupants of several neighboring tables. He looked as if he had it in for the person. "Don't be afraid—just speak up!" he commanded her.

But somehow, though she did not know why, Trella felt very much frightened, indeed.

"Wh-what person?" she stammered, her eyes large and apprehensive.

"Why, the one who gave the signal for the strike," answered Baker. "The waiters have gone to put on their street clothes. They'll march through here onto Broadway in a minute. If I could just lay hands on the fellow that sneaked in here to give the signal—I guess he'd remember me for a while!"

A terrifying suspicion seized on Trella's mind, as a dentist might seize one's jaw when preparing to administer punishment with a pair of forceps.

"What kind of a signal?" she murmured faintly.

"Why, a whistle!"

Trella lopped forward inertly. Her hands grew cold.

"Didn't you hear it?" continued Baker. "It reached me away on the other side of the room. A whistle was to be their cue to quit, if Jaynes refused to wait until to-morrow."

"Then—that—was—why—they all ran away?" asked Trella incoherently. "I—I wondered what made them."

"Dropped everything as soon as they caught it," confirmed Baker. "I'd do something to get even if I could just

find out whose whistle it was they walked out on!"

Again his indignant glance swept the line of tables adjacent to Trella's.

The girl's inborn honesty forced her to make confession.

"Perhaps it was my whistle they walked out on," she announced chokingly.

"W-h-a-t?" Baker's voice and eyebrows rose to an astonished and astounding height.

"My imitation, you know," explained the embarrassed girl, growing flushed and tearful as she proceeded, yet with an hysterical desire to laugh: "I was experimenting—all to myself—and it came out so loud it scared me. But I didn't mean to start a strike or anything—believe me, I didn't. I'm so sorry! I'm always doing what I never meant to do somehow. When it was up to me to whistle for Mr. Brown—I couldn't—and when I shouldn't have whistled for you—I did!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the amazed Baker. "Well, it's a pretty pickle—" He stopped, staring over the girl's head at some one he saw approaching.

A small, dark, foreign-looking individual rushed past Trella and up to the manager.

"What has happened here? Where are all the waiters?" he asked excitedly. "Some one said they'd struck! They're not doing it on my orders. I'm Jaynes, and I've agreed to give Brown until tomorrow to decide—"

"Then come out here and save my life!" shouted the manager, gesturing with both arms toward the door through which the procession of waiters had lately passed. "Tell them some one's whistle went off by mistake, and get them back to work—quick—before Brown finds out!"

As soon as she was left alone, Trella



The little whistler did herself full justice at the banquet.

settled for her tea and toast at the cashier's desk, and made her escape to the street. Baker must consider her the most stupid girl alive to have put him in such a predicament—and she could not bear to meet him again!

"What's your hurry?" Hatless and panting, the object of her thoughts overtook her before she had gone a block.

"You!" gasped Trella faintly, and stopped under the awning of a show window, pale and trembling.

"Don't be frightened!" exclaimed the manager, with a laugh of boyish relief. "There's no harm done. They're all back on the job and glad to be there. A few customers got disgusted and left, but they'll make a return trip soon as they find out it was a false alarm. What made you run away?"

"Because—I didn't want to see you

again—after muddling things the way I did—that's all."

"But I wanted to see you—that's why I undertook the Marathon to catch up with you," laughed Baker softly.

His smile was warm and magnetic, and Trella smiled faintly in return.

"And," he added, "I wanted to tell you that there'll be a little cabaret show in the restaurant to-night—it's Brown's own club, and he'll be there for the banquet—and if you'd like a real try-out, he'll be sure to hear you—and it might lead to something worth while."

"Oh, but you couldn't—you wouldn't dare—I've been unlucky all day—I might disgrace you!" She struggled between smiles and tears. "It's awfully kind of you to want to give me another chance with Mr. Brown—but—you have only my say-so for what I can do. How do you know that I can whistle, anyway?"

"I've heard you," quoth Baker, with a touch of good-natured grimness. "Didn't you make a hit with my waiters?"

"But why should you care to do this for me—a stranger?"

"I've been a stranger in New York myself," said Baker.

Trella's mother sings "There is a happy land" with more fervor than ever now. The little whistler did herself full justice at the banquet. In fact, Brown sent for her after her first solo to come over to his table, offering her an engagement at his theater then and there, not even recognizing her—in her highly becoming concert dress—as the same girl who had applied to him for a try-out that morning.

Nothing succeeds like success, we are told. Trella whistled for two weeks in succession at Brown's theater, and for several triumphant weeks at other vaudeville houses after that. Then she was offered five months of big-time bookings that would take her clear out to the coast and back.

When the contract was handed her, she was delighted, and fully expected to sign it. But then she was a girl who seldom did just what she had counted on doing. Perhaps that is why she turned down the contract to marry Milton S. Baker instead.



The Two Hearts

BELOVED, since you came, two hearts I own.
The first beside your hearth's warm altar stone
Sits cloistered close, nor, gladsome, dreams to ask
A dearer portion than the daily task;
Content to spin, and stir the glowing peat,
And wait the echoed home song of your feet;
To dream, to serve, to love—and all the while
To know its Heaven close within your smile.

But when the toil-gray streets have dimmed to rest,
Within the quiet cloister of my breast
That drowsy lies—the other eager wakes,
And forth its vagrant staff, wayfaring, takes
Is spring-sweet dreams that haunt the fern-wet glade,
And walk the moon-white roadways unafraid;
Forgetting thee, thy love—ah, even this!—
To tremble at the first-met gypsy's kiss.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



A Communistic Phantasma

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY H.Y. MAYER

THE animals of the Zoo
They went upon a strike.
They swore like mad
That the gifts they had
They would share and share alike.

Upspeak the Kangaroo:
"Oh, I can leap like sin,
But my little front paws
They have no claws,
And my chest is weak and thin."

Upspeak the Hippopot:
"I've a roly-cum-poly shape,
But I can't catch fleas,
Or scramble up trees,
Like the wonderful Barbary Ape."

Then the Bird of Paradise
Chirped up with a birdlike spunk:
"Sure, my tail is fair
As an angel's hair,
But I haven't the Elephant's trunk."

Now, the Keeper of the Zoo
 Had a sociological mind,
 So he said: "It's just
 That each animal must
 Have a share of the other kind."

Hence, he sewed the Elephant's trunk
 On the Bird of Paradise,
 And the arms of the Ape
 On the Hippo's shape
 He stitched with a careful splice.

And he gave to the Kangaroo
 The leonine teeth and paws,
 So that Australasian
 Nature-evasion
 Hopped with ferocious claws.

Then the Keeper of that same Zoo
 Gazed long at each strange, weird It,
 Cried: "Mother o' me!
 Oh, what do I see?"
 And he fell in a catnip fit.

And he said as they brought him to:
 "Though men at their birthright curse,
 Each crying 'Unfair!'
 At his given share—
 Look out! for it might be worse."





S i m p l i c i t y

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "True Love," "Lansing's Daughter," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

WHEN, in October, Glorvina's summons arrived for her old friends to come to tea at the Santa Regina, that newest and most elegantly gilded hostelry of the city, a broad and appreciative smile traveled around the extensive circle of her acquaintances. So Glorvina was back in town, was she? She, who had shaken its dust rather ostentatiously from her well-shod feet only last April—she was back, was she? After all her strictures upon the garishness, the noise, the vul-

garity of New York, she had returned to it, had she? And to a hotel like the Santa Regina at that! That was in the nature of a "good joke" on Glorvina.

We all trooped to the meeting place on the appointed afternoon. Not one of us Christian souls would have missed the opportunity to taunt Glorvina, whose hegira last spring had been somewhat in the nature of a tacit reflection upon us, whose nerves and tastes were not sufficiently delicate and high to drive us away from Broadway. We

hastened to her tea party, filled with the charitable desire to laugh at her.

We went whizzing up, smoothly and noiselessly, in the upholstered elevator, to Glorvina's apartments. After the manner of true friends, we computed the cost per diem, to Glorvina and Mr. Glorvina, of residence in the Santa Regina. Of course, we said extenuatingly, she had probably saved enough at North Haskins Corners to justify her in staying at the Santa Regina for a few days; there was no way to spend money at North Haskins Corners. But wasn't it a joke on Glorvina, who had talked so eloquently, not to say persistently, on the showy, blatant vulgarity of New York hotels?

The elevator man let us out on the appointed floor, a white-aproned maid, adorning the remote perspective of the Persian-runned corridor glided noiselessly toward us, and inducted us into Glorvina's side corridor, whence we were swallowed into the sunny quiet of Glorvina's rooms, far above the glittering, crowded noise of Fifth Avenue. We found the immediate foreground of her sitting room—a modest thing done in Circassian walnut, English chintz, and French prints—occupied by a tea table, over which a waiter hovered coaxingly, like a mother trying to induce her bashful child to reveal the full measure of his charm and intellect. More readily than the average mother, however, the waiter was successful; the alcohol flame burst into blue-and-orange flower beneath the Sheffield kettle, the Minturn cups were arranged so that Glorvina might pour the tea with the minimum of exertion, the covered dish of muffins was indicated, and the coaxing waiter withdrew.

Meantime, of course, Glorvina was welcoming us. And the first words of mockery wherewith we had planned to greet her were stilled on our lips, or deferred, at least, by some subtle change in Glorvina's appearance and manner. At first, we didn't exactly define it. Then some one cried: "Why, Glorvina! How much thinner you are!" It was true. Glorvina was thinner. We noted also that she looked older. There was

certainly a whole wisp of gray hair on her left temple, where there had been only the glint of a few silver threads in the spring. And there was an unmistakable line between her black brows, where of old there had been the merest faint record of the fact that sometimes Glorvina frowned forbiddingly upon a stupid world that delayed her in the execution of her wishes. There was a parenthesis about her lips, too, and a fine network of lines about her eyes—neither of them the pleasant work of laughter.

A flash of something like pleasure came into Glorvina's tired eyes at the immediate recognition of the change in her outlines. "Thinner!" she cried proudly. "I should say I am! I've lost twenty-seven pounds!" For Glorvina had passed her thirtieth milestone, and it is safe to say that every woman who has journeyed that far on her earthly pilgrimage regards it a finer compliment to be told that she is losing weight than she would be told that her eyes were stars, her cheeks roses, and her disposition perfect. Some day, by the way, an industrious student of women's ways will compile a handbook of compliments adapted to the various ages of woman, and easy-going, unobservant man's social pathway will be easier. Meantime, suffice it to say that Glorvina was at the age when to lose flesh is the chief joy of life, and its greatest tragedy is to widen waistbands.

"How did you do it, Glorvina?" inquired a hundred-and-sixty-pounder, leaning anxiously forward. "I simply can't bant, and rolling on the floor hasn't seemed to help me a bit!"

"I don't know," replied Glorvina. "I didn't do anything. It just happened." Then she began to manipulate a teapot, a teakettle, a tea ball, and the rest of the implements for an afternoon cup of refreshment; and the woman who was beginning to tell of the marvelous reduction accomplished by her cousin, through the exclusive use of buttermilk as food, was silenced by some one who remembered to begin jeering at Glorvina.

"How is it, Glorvina, dear," this one

asked merrily, "that you are here in this ornate and—pardon my mentioning it—expensive spot; you, the apostle of simplicity, you, the scorner of pomp and the appurtenances thereto? What are you doing here? Is it for long? Or will North Haskins Corners engulf you again as soon as you have ordered your winter clothes? That was to be your only reason for coming to town—that and the opera! And it's too early for opera. Why have you gone back on the simple life?"

"Gone back on the simple life?" echoed Glorvina scornfully. "I haven't. I'm here to live it in its perfection for a few days, and then I'll live it less perfectly in the most modern apartment that we can possibly afford—the most telephoned, vacuum-cleaned, hot-watered, ice-planted, bell-boayed apartment in the city."

"But," we began, and then sat staring at her helplessly. Glorvina swallowed a hot cup of tea and replied to our looks of bewilderment.

"Oh, I know!" she said airily. "But you are all mistaken—just as I used to be mistaken. There is only one place in the world to lead a simple life, and that is where life is most complex. Don't for an instant think that I have forsaken my ideal; only I have learned that it must be reached by other means than those I tried before!"

"If this," we said, with meaning looks around the room, "is your idea of simplicity—"

"It is!" replied Glorvina emphatically, almost explosively. "Oh, I don't mean that I am converted to Circassian walnut as the only wood compatible with simplicity, and that I insist upon a paneled wall before I am willing to consider life simple. Those happen to be accidental adjuncts of simple living."

"What about the feeling that drove you to North Haskins Corners?" we demanded. "Will you kindly recall a few of the things you used to say concerning the complexity of life in this city of ours? Will you recollect your strictures on the lack of leisure, on the lack of time to learn to know your own husband and children, on the complete

lack of opportunity to become acquainted with your own soul? Do you remember your scorn of all of us, doing things in droves, without individuality, without real tastes, as you used to say? You were wont to declare that we didn't have leisure to investigate our temperaments, and to learn what we really liked and admired—we merely followed somebody's lead each season? It was as if our intellectual pursuits and our pastimes were decided at the tailors' convention, along with the length of our coats, you said!"

"And thereby you quoted that French writer—what's her name?" struck in some one else. "The woman who wrote 'On the Branch'? Oh, yes! Pierre de Coulevain! Well, ever since I read her remarks on the American woman, I have wondered if she ever by any chance had the privilege of hearing you talk, Glorvina! You were always declaring that New York women had even their fads in droves, as if they bought them at the same bargain sale at the same department store! You insisted that we all did the same thing at the same time, like a flock of senseless sheep, following the bellwether. And she noticed the same thing—the Pierre de Coulevain lady. She says that one year we're daffy about some sort of science, like geology for example, and that nothing else gets a glimmer of enthusiasm from us; then that we are crazy—en masse—over a poet, like Browning; and that the next year you see a volume of Balzac in every feminine hand capable of holding anything more subtle than a dishmop—I admit I translate her somewhat freely and flippantly. But that's her opinion of us. And it used to be yours, Glorvina. And that was the reason you left us to sorrow last spring, and retired to the country, to live simply, to have leisure to learn your own tastes and your own soul—you remember how you talked! And here you are again. We demand an explanation of your shocking inconsistency!"

"I am not inconsistent," declared Glorvina positively, "and even if I were, you needn't be reminded that con-



"You both kneel down and hump along beside the little furrows, committing little kernels to it."

sistency is the bugbear of little minds. I have merely discovered that I was journeying along the wrong road—that

I was, to speak bucolically, barking up the wrong tree—when I transported myself and my household to North Haskins Corners for simplicity and leisure, for opportunity to enjoy my husband's society, and to invite my soul. I've come back because I want the very things for which I went away, but I know now that they are not to be found in the country—at any rate, not without the fortune of a Mr. John Rockefeller or a Mrs. Hetty Green!"

"But, Glorvina! The time-consuming, time-wasting telephone!" we reminded her. "Always ringing the very instant you settled down to read a book! Always having some idiot on the other end of the wire who wanted you to serve on a committee, or to make a fourth at an unexpected bridge table, or to give the name of the little dressmaker who made such a success of your apricot charmeuse the winter before last! How about the telephone, Glorvina, the destroyer of household calm, the foe of peace, the deadly enemy of thought and meditation? You know you can't escape the telephone in the city?"

"No," said Glorvina sadly, "you can't. I admit that, and I am sorry for it, in a way. If only an inventor would invent a sentient telephone, so that you could tell by its ring whether it's your husband telling you to meet him at the four-o'clock Chicago Limited with a packed dress-suit case, or merely Dolly Jones, to say that she is lonely, and just feels like a talk with you! But until the reasoning, discriminating telephone is invented, I am free to confess that one gains more leisure through its use than one loses.

"You see, we had no telephone at North Haskins Corners. The Southern New England Telephone Company resembles all other telephone companies in being haughty and independent, and it wouldn't wire our house for us—except at a J. Pierpont Morgan price—unless there were enough subscribers near by to make it pay. Well, the neighbors didn't want telephones on the company's terms, and I assured Gus that I didn't want one on any terms. I said

that, though, of course, in a neighborhood where we were free of acquaintances, it wouldn't be quite the nuisance it was in town, it would, nevertheless, be a blessed relief never to hear the jangle of its bell again! And I didn't hear the jangle of its bell again—I didn't hear the jangle of its bell when Gus sent a telegram saying that he couldn't come up Friday evening as usual, and I drove four miles to meet him in consequence of that blessed silence! The telegraph office mailed the message, and I received it two days later. And I didn't hear the jangle of the nerve-destroying telephone when our cows got loose from their pasture and wandered a few miles up the north road to the next township, while Pete, the boy, and I drove east and south respectively, searching them, and lost some five or six hours of the time I might have spent in discovering my real tastes in literature!

"And I couldn't make any one else hear its hated jangle the night the determined and tuneful drunken man got into the cellar, and stayed there, singing, until Pete came home from the village at half past twelve, and put him out! I think that that single experience cost me about two years of my life—I was frightened half to death! I was afraid to go to my next-door neighbor's for help, because, of course, I couldn't leave the children alone in the house with the mauldin songster; and I didn't dare face him myself, although I commanded him, in a dreadfully shaky voice, down the cellar stairs, to leave the premises at once! No—I am sure that the telephone saves more time than it loses for one! The way to make it perfect would be, as I said, to invent a reasoning one, or a delicately adjusted one, that would have different vibrations at a fool's tone and at a friend's, or a family voice, so that you might have fair warning what to expect when it rang! Or else"—Glorvina ended dreamily, remotely, and looking off into space—"to revise the list of one's acquaintances!"

"But the theater, Glorvina!" we exclaimed, ignoring the suggestion about the revised visiting list. "How many

evenings did you compute that you and Gus wasted in going to see things that didn't interest you just because people invited you, or you invited people, or just because you were restless with city restlessness, and it seemed easier to go and see the play or the actor that every one was talking about, than not to go? How much time? You said—"

"I said," replied Glorvina firmly, "that we had been to the theater fifty-nine times last winter, and that I had seen exactly eight plays that interested me, either for themselves or for their acting. We were out—let's see—a theater always meant more dressing than an evening at home—say half an hour; then half an hour to go, half an hour home, an hour and a half for supper generally, two hours and a half for the play—oh, about six hours an evening. Multiply that by fifty—by forty-five, even. I want to be fair! Two hundred and seventy hours—wasted! Counting a working day as eight hours—thirty-three days thrown away! To say nothing of the expenditure of another commodity than time! A long, beautiful time that might have been devoted to something satisfying! To learning something! To talking with one's friends! To discovering one's own soul! Wasted!"

"Well," we said impatiently, "there were no time and money-wasting theaters in North Haskins Corners!"

"There were not," Glorvina agreed heartily. "But—there was a dramatic club! It gave three performances in the schoolhouse while I abode in North Haskins Corners. I was asked to join it as soon as we went up there. They came singly and collectively, the members, and entreated me to. I was firm; I belonged to a dramatic club when I was in college, and I know enough to keep out of one now. I knew what it would mean in rehearsals, in jealousies, in bickerings over parts and plays; so I was adamant, and kept out of it, although Gus, the worthless creature, wanted me to join it so that he wouldn't be bothered to do so! Well, I didn't join. And at first the story ran about that I was 'proud,' and did not wish to



"We took pictures of the children

associate with the simple agriculturists among whom I had cast my lot. The leading lady of the dramatic club was the harnessmaker's wife, and she was sure that it was an aristocratic spirit that made me decline membership. So I had to waste an awful amount of time visiting, sitting about, gossiping, talking, exchanging recipes, just to remove that impression, and to establish my democratic reputation! And then the club felt at liberty to use me. It said that since it had acceded to my wishes, and had not forced me to join, I would have to be very kind and help it a lot with advice and suggestion. I had just come from New York, and, of course, I was familiar with all theatrical matters, and could be of unbounded assistance to it if only I would be so good. The result was that I attended most of the rehearsals for the three plays, that I sewed the new stage curtain on my machine, that I read twelve 'plays for amateurs' to help them decide upon the production for the Fourth of July evening, that I soothed the jealous suspicions of

the wife of the driver of the creamery wagon, whose spouse freely declared that, in his opinion, no professional actress could outshine the leading lady! That was the lengthiest of my jobs. And they were planning an unusually active winter—the North Haskins Corners Thespians! Oh, I could never have stayed, not if I expected to have a moment to call my own!"

"You used to talk a good deal about the fresh vegetables, and the lowing kine, and the soft clouds, and the wind in the pines," we reminded her. "Were these all delusions and shams also?"

"Well," said Glorvina meditatively, with the air of a person trying to be just, "the clouds were no delusion, and the wind in the trees was melodious. Also, the vegetables were good, when you got them. It sounds so much simpler to go out into the garden wearing a sunbonnet and a denim garden apron—a terribly hot garment, by the way—than to put on your street clothes and go to market. Well, it is simpler, in a way. But it took me longer to pick a



with their arms around the little calves' necks."

peck of fresh peas than it used to take me in town to order the whole dinner, and to get home again. Of course, I must say again that the peas were infinitely better than the market produce of town. But picking the peas when they are ripe is one step—and only one step—in a long, laborious process of obtaining peas. You begin to plan your June peas back in March, if you live in North Haskins Corners. You order your seed. Then you wonder impatiently if it will ever stop raining so that the garden may be prepared. You worry about the frost, which persists long after it ought to be gone. But finally the soil is ready to be planted—fertilizer has been spread and plowed in, stones have been removed, the earth has been harrowed, and you and Pete finally go forth with a garden line, a basket of seeds, a misgiving heart, and a vegetable-garden guidebook in your hands. You draw the line taut between you and Pete, and then he marks little furrows by it, and then you both kneel down and hump along beside the little

furrows, committing little kernels to it, covering them with earth, patting it down, pressing it down gently with your foot, and wondering if that will be the end of the whole matter! I assure you that planting a vegetable garden has made me a believer in any miracles any one chooses to tell me of! It was a never-failing source of surprise to me that the seeds sprouted. And then, by and by, you see little rows of green pricking through that earth you have pressed down with so many doubts, and then you weed, and water, and spray, and weed some more, and water some more, and spray some more, and wonder why there is no rain, or why there is so much; and then you weed, and spray, and water, and occasionally prune a little. I tell you that I don't wonder, any longer, at the high cost of living. I am amazed it isn't higher! Those 'cheap,' home-grown peas of ours—how much went into their production! But they were delicious, there's no gainsaying that! I never expect to eat such vegetables again; and if I lived to eat

vegetables instead of to enjoy friendship and to serve high ideals, I should doubtless remain at North Haskins Corners, and give myself and my immortal spirit up to peas and sweet corn!"

"So raising your own vegetables, and your own milk and eggs, didn't simplify life to the extent that you expected?"

"As I have told you! Milk—" Glorvina looked sad. "Milk seems of all the adjuncts of a simple life the very simplest, doesn't it? So much simpler than coffee, which has a tang of worldliness and excitement in it, or than tea, so acid and sophisticated. And, of course, so very much simpler than some of the other things one sometimes drinks! Well, my dear friends, milk is no more simple than the most intricate product of the culinary art. It isn't as simple—I mean to its producer, the cow owner—as whipped syllabubs, or Russian punches, or the cocktails that the bartender at Gus' club is famous for making! A cow is about as easy to deal with as a prima donna. Never be deceived by their placid and contented look as you pass them lying under the trees beside the brook, and chewing their cud! Our herd was Jersey, you know. And we were inordinately proud of it. We also became fond of its members, and took a simpering pleasure in the fact that they learned to let us come near them without shying, or butting, or anything. We took pictures of the children with their arms around the little calves' necks, and other pictures of Gus, smiling fatuously, and proffering cornstalks to the mother of the herd. But Pete would come in from time to time with the statement that one or the other of them was not giving her due quota of milk, or was growing thin, or was cross because of the flies, or had smashed her tail, catching it in a fence crevice as she swished it viciously, or had broken every barrier down, and had reached her calf, and given it the evening's milk supply! And when he reported trouble we would all troop out and stare at the cow under discussion, and try to look wise, and wonder if anything was going to happen to her!"

"You can imagine—no, you can't!" Glorvina suddenly changed her opinion as to the power of our imaginations. "You can't imagine how we felt when, finally, one of the dyed-in-the-wool native neighbors said to us: 'That cow looks to me pretty sickly. She ain't what she was in the spring. Tuberculosis, that's the way it looks to me, but you can't never tell till they've tried this yere test the State prescribes neow."

"Oh!" we all breathed in sympathetic unison.

"Wasn't it dreadful?" said Glorvina, translating the monosyllable. "Of course, we told each other—Gus and I—that the native neighborhood was jealous of our pretty pets. Also, that it was sensational—country people were notoriously sensational! But there was nothing for us to do, after hearing that opinion and watching Pete's diminishing milk pail, but to send for the veterinary and the tuberculin test. Meantime, of course, the children were taken off their milk diet. It seemed, on the whole, safer to feed them strychnine. Not that we did—don't misunderstand! We merely bought our milk from a distant, tested herd until the vet had been to us, and had made his report. Well, that was the greatest tragedy of our experiment in simple living! And the fact that the veterinary told us, with the urbane, wise air of the man who didn't have to pocket the loss, or to consider the health of his children, that Jerseys were particularly liable to the disease, and that we were fortunate not to find the whole herd infected, but only a part of it, didn't seem to reconcile us. He charged us only twenty-five dollars for finding one cow diseased!"

"The simple life of the countryside! When the first cook left me, I sent for another, with no more misgivings than I should have felt in town. When that one departed by the next train out of North Haskins Corners, I said that, after all, the same thing had occurred in my city experience. When the sixth one went down, I sent for a fireless cooker, and declared that I could manage alone. The trouble was, I told my

self and Gus, that I had been merely 'faking' simplicity. It was the very essence of that quality that life should be conducted on such a scale as to render one independent of all servants. So I cut out a course from dinner, reduced supper to a single service of plates, sent for an invoice of wooden dishes, paper napkins, and the like, and set out to be simple in earnest.

"My dears, I confess it—I, who have played golf all day long, and then have been ready to dance in the evening, I, who have ridden horseback forty rough miles and have risen fresh and limber the next day, I, who have always prided myself on my strength—I was floored by the first few days' work! Floored! I crept to bed foot-sore, and weary, and bearishly cross at night. I snapped at the children, and I developed a grievance against Gus. Of course, I kept the house clean, and I kept the family fed; I also kept the cats and dogs fed—it was one of our objects, in going to North Haskins Corners, to have the children grow up with domestic animals, and be on intimate terms with them. I also strained and 'took care of' that tested milk, and made butter. Furthermore, I learned to make bread, and I made such good bread that the household ate more of it than usual, and then I had the privilege of making some more.

"I got over my awful attacks of muscle weariness after the first week, but I didn't get over my attacks of crossness. And I noticed that, little by little, I went back toward the simplicity of my neighbors. I give you my word, girls"—Glorvina dropped into the expression of ten years earlier in our careers—"that when I remembered it was I who had to sweep and dust, I actually took to closing the living-room windows against the admission of dust, and I seriously contemplated making the family take its meals in the kitchen in close proximity to the denatured-alcohol stove and the fireless cooker. I didn't quite do that—I think it was the presence of Pete that restrained me—but I did reach the point where I would no

more have filled the candlesticks for dinner than I would have flown. I grew so tired of filling oil lamps and the necessary candles that the ornamental ones went by the board! And I took to washing out the vases and putting them on a pantry shelf. It was too great a labor to keep them filled with fresh flowers.

"And suddenly, one morning, I waked up to the fact that if I wasn't leading the simple life, I was leading a mighty bare and unadorned one! And I began to consider what the simple life really meant, or what I had meant by it. I had meant a life of a certain amount of singleness, if you know just what that is—one not cut into by thousands of little interests and excitements, but large, unfrittered, with an abundance of calm leisure—that's a different thing from lazy leisure—for self-understanding, and for the study and contemplation of things even better than oneself. And I had mistakenly imagined that I was going to obtain that sort of simplicity by casting away all that recent civilization has given us—all the things that make for freedom, that make for an existence not dominated by drudgery and pettiness. It isn't," Glorvina concluded her tale didactically, "all the labor-saving devices, all the opportunities of a great city, that make our existences here complex—it's the foolish, frittery way in which we waste the leisure they give us."

We filed out of Glorvina's gorgeous temporary abiding place—the perch on which she had alighted before seeking a new nest in which to practice an instructed, an enlightened simplicity—with thoughtful faces. There was something in what she said, something in the new point of view!

"My!" said the hundred-and-sixty-pounder, as we stepped into the noisy street. "It may not have been a success as an experiment in Large, Leisurely Living, or whatever she calls it, but it was a success in weight reduction all right!"

And she wore the look of one who contemplates going and doing likewise!

Obe Morelock, Hero

By
Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "The Little Good,"
"The Pretender," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BUNKER

HE was seventeen, freckled, jeans-clad, barefoot, and he faced the problem with the front of a fighter. Chestnuts had failed; the hogs had been lost because of the sweeping mountain fires; drought had killed the little corn they had planted in the clearing; even game was scarce that year. And they were out of everything, almost!

Granny Davis, his maternal grandmother, talked on, the gist of it being that the Lord would provide for them in their present emergency. But Obe didn't hear; he was looking absently and with drawn brows toward the long-eared hound that lay sleeping in the fading sunlight in the cabin doorway, and dreaming dog dreams. Suppose granny's faith in the Divinity were broken!

"No," the old woman said again, noting that Obe had not been listening, "I hain't a bit skeered. I tell you, the Lord will provide. We hain't got more'n enough meal and bacon for supper, but I hain't skeered. You'll see if somethin' don't happen afore mornin'!"

The lad rose so suddenly that he jammed a splinter from the rough board floor into his bare foot. With a muttered imprecation, he stooped and savagely drew the particle of wood from the flesh—and it was forgotten.

"Why, what can you be a-goin', boy?" asked Granny Davis, limping two paces toward the youth.

"Possum huntin'," answered Obe readily. "Dark enough, time I git



"Hain't nothin' a-goin' to hurt me, granny."

across the railroad and over to the Honeycomb Cliffs. Good place for possums thar; pokeberries and persimmons grows below. Gimme that thar lantern thar, 'By, granny! Come on here, Rock!" The latter to the hound.

The apparent snappishness in his conversation was but his manner, for he liked his grandmother; in all the world she was all he had to love and all that loved him.

He had started. But the old woman was uneasy about his going into the Honeycomb Cliff section, beyond the railroad; there were moonshiners there, and she feared that Obe might meet up with a rifle bullet intended for a revenue spy, as the lad was not well known among them. She hobbled to the doorway.

"But looky here, Obe——"

Obe threw back over his shoulder, the one that bore the weight of the long rifle that had been his father's:

"Hain't nothin' a-goin' to hurt me,



The mountains took up the cries and echoed them, multiplying them again and again.

granny. If the possums has done been provided, shorely I'd orter have spunk enough to go after 'em. 'By, granny!"

He closed the hingeless gate, pushed his powderhorn farther back on his hip, and set out across the flattened crest of the mountain, the hound leaping and whining with joy. For half a mile he followed out to his left, through rattleweed and withered ferns, picking his way carefully in order to avoid stepping on the prickly chestnut burs. He was cutting off a long bend in the trail.

An hour later night had fallen, and the crisp air of autumn and the mountains caused him to shiver. He shivered from something besides the air, too.

Just below a sharp curve in the railroad, and lying midway between the rails, on one of the heaviest grades east of the Rockies, the light of his lantern fell upon a bowlder the size of a barrel, which had tumbled down from the cliff above—and the downcoming express was due within thirty minutes!

Obe had a vision of a crashing of

splintering wood and twisting steel as the coaches, laden to their capacity with tourists on their way to Florida, rolled down the precipitous mountainside below the curve. In another minute he was rushing up the tracks, his rifle in one hand, his lantern in the other, toward the first safety switch, which was a quarter of a mile above.

He told the switchman of the boulder, breathlessly. The man seized a red-globed lantern and some long objects that spewed and threw bright, crimson glares, and hurried to meet the train, planting the red warning here and there as he ran. Soon the mountainsides were glowing in the vivid light.

As the headlight of the mammoth engine came into view, both Obe and the switchman waved their lanterns, in addition to the danger signals that hissed like maddened serpents behind them. There was a shrill whistling for brakes, and the pilot of the great iron horse came to a standstill within ten feet of the man and the boy. Two greasy men leaped from the cab and rushed down upon Obe and the switchman, asking what had happened.

"Big rock on track," explained Obe, pointing down the grade.

Carefully the train was let down to a point within a hundred feet of the boulder. The train's crew and the switchman soon rolled the big stone across the outside rail, and another moment saw it plunging with a roar down the steep mountainside. Then followed a taking of the boy's name by the conductor, while others of the crew pressed sundry coins into his brown hands.

Obe accepted the money greedily, because he knew that he needed it for Granny Davis, who was all that he loved, and all that loved him, in the whole world. And then came scores of passengers in a rush, both men and women, who had heard what had occurred. They crowded about Obe Morelock and wrung his hands, with tears in their eyes; they tendered him a goodly percentage of the contents of their purses; one man gave his watch, and a woman followed up the example

by the donation of her own little gold timepiece.

Following this, two very large men, who were perfectly dressed, and wore blazing things in their shirt fronts and in rings on their fingers, took the barefoot mountain lad upon their shoulders and paraded him up and down the track, finally bringing up before the engine, and there facing the crowd in the light of the crew's lanterns.

"Three cheers!" called one of them.

The mountains took up the cries and echoed them, multiplying them again and again. More than one woman dabbed at her eyes, tried to talk, and couldn't; several more increased their original contribution to the fund for the reward of bravery.

"Three cheers!" ordered a very old man, too deaf to have heard the others, too feeble to have reached the scene any earlier.

Again they went up, and again the mountains, in the words of a tender-hearted young woman, "took up the cries and echoed them because they knew they were for a son of theirs."

The old man swelled the fund by the addition of a ten-dollar note. Then, after another round of handshaking, well-wishing, and taking of Obe Morelock's name, the passengers and the crew boarded the train.

"I wouldn't 'a' took these here things," Obe said to himself, and to the silence, his heart very full, "if granny didn't need 'em. Granny always said that'd be a way provided, and I be durned if she wasn't right about it."

He shouldered the rifle that had been his father's, called the hound, and set out across the mountains, bound homeward. For there was no necessity for going to the Honeycomb Cliffs now; his pockets were stuffed with money—and money would buy things to eat and things to wear for Granny Davis far quicker than would possum hides.

Obe drew up at the rickety gate with a breath of relief. The cries of the owls and the pressure of the darkness had been mighty lonesome. The hound, disappointed, slipped between his legs and



"Obe, in the name o' goodness, who was it you robbed?"

went to the cabin ahead of him, creeping sullenly under the floor.

Granny Davis knew his knock, even though it was somewhat different from his usual summons. She came to the door, opened it, and threw it wide.

"Why, you hain't been to the Honeycomb Clifts shorely!" was her surprised greeting.

"I hain't, I shore hain't," agreed Obe, striding past his grandmother, and setting the lantern on the little, oilcloth-covered table. "I didn't have to go to the Honeycomb Clifts. Set down over thar, granny, and lemme show you a little somethin'-somethin' that'll shore

make yore eyes look like a skeered coon's."

The old woman hobbled around the table and dropped wearily into a creaking chair.

When she was seated, Obe drew from his pocket a handful of silver and placed it, with a loud and musical jingle, in a convenient dinner plate.

"What you got to say to that, gran-ny?" he grinned.

"Why, Obe!" cried Granny Davis, her eyes as wide as he had said they would be.

The boy added another handful of coins to the pile.

"And that!" he said joyously.

"Why, Obe!" as a few other pieces of silver and several bank notes found their way to the dinner plate.

"Obe Morelock——"

"And these here!" He held out the two watches, his eyes shining, his throat pulsating with gladness.

But the old woman's face had fallen at sight of the timepieces. She looked her grandson straight in the eyes, and shook one wrinkled, tremulous finger toward him.

"Obe Morelock, what have you done went and done! Oh, my God, you've done robbed somebody! What would yore pore pap and mother say if they knewed it? Why, Obe Morelock, they'd turn over in their graves! Obe, in the name o' goodness, who was it you robbed?"

"Stiddy, now, granny—stiddy that!" smiled Obe. "As I crossed the railroad I seen a big rock on the track; I got the evenin' train stopped in time to save everybody's life, and they give me these here things here."

"Why, Obe!" Her face brightened.

"Shore did, wisht I may die if they didn't!" said the lad. "Now, jest maybe

I won't git you a new dress, and somethin' good to eat, and some new dishes, and—everythin' you want, you old darlin' of a gran'maw, you!"

Granny Davis hugged him, kissed him, patted him on the back, and said he was the best boy in the world.

"And I told you, Obe, honey," she reminded, with her old eyes like jewels, "that somethin' would turn up afore mornin'."

Obadiah Morelock slept little that night. For long he lay in his narrow bed in the cabin loft, and watched the silvery stars pass as in review before him through a knot hole in one of the boards of the roof. His mind was satisfied when he had thought it all over, however; Granny Davis was old and childish, and faith broken in the Master, at a time when she had but little longer to live, might have been faith broken forever. Yes, it had been virtually a holdup; but he had done it for her—because, of all the people in the world, she was all that he loved, and all that loved him.

For the Lord had provided only the bowlder; Obe himself had provided the sapling handspike that had dislodged it from the cliff above the tracks.

Voices from the Tomb

MISS MARGARET DRAPER, heiress to the millions of General William F. Draper, formerly ambassador to Italy, hung up a record during her life abroad with her father as one of the wittiest American girls that ever visited Europe.

The last time she returned to this country her neighbor at a dinner in Boston asked her:

"Did you see many picturesque old ruins during your trip?"

"Yes," she replied, "and six of them proposed to me."

A Privilege of Newspapers

MRS. MARTIN LITTLETON, the wife of the New York lawyer, has as a favorite theme the ability of newspapers to keep public men on the straight and narrow path of rectitude, and she tells this story in support of her position:

A political orator in a small town near Dallas, Texas, was abusing bitterly trusts and monopolies, on the ground that all of them robbed the public.

"Are we to take this lying down?" he shouted at the end of his hottest sentence.

Whereupon a little man rose up in the back of the hall and shouted:

"It's unnecessary. The reporters will do that part of it."

“Youth Shows But Half”



By
**HELEN
BAKER
PARKER**

Author of “Larry’s Affinity,” etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBT. A. GRAEF

WELL,” said the youngest postmaster’s assistant, “some folks think these magazines are light reading, but they’ve given me an awful backache—and the dance to-night at the town hall, too! Talk about reading matter! Carrier number two must have some intellectual ladies on his route! I’ve lifted forty tons of love stories and helpful hints this morning. Now it’s his turn. Say, Miss Jones, did you read that lovely story in this magazine last month about that young man that—”

The oldest assistant smiled indulgently, made a deterrent motion in space that meant “Keep still, I’m adding!” and went on with her daily billet-doux to the government. When it had been added up, and down, and across, she gave a sigh of relief, wiped her best pen, hid it behind the pile of “uncalled fors,” and got up to sell a package of stamped business envelopes, number two, to Mr. M. J. Tiffany.

“That,” said the youngest assistant, upon his departure, “is what comes of a college education! I guess he has the niftiest tea-and-coffee emporium west of New York. Oh, you ought to see my dress for to-night! White, with the loveliest embroidery—the very latest—and short, for dancing, you know.”

Miss Jones did not know. She had never danced.

“I know you’ll look nice in it,” said she. “There’s nothing like white, really, for dressing up.” Miss Jones usually wore black, and when she did yield to the love of delicate colors that springs eternal in a woman’s breast, she was very careful to blow the dust off her table, where she kept accounts with the United States; for laundry counts up so when you just board.

She looked out through the bars of her little cage at the sky. She believed that it was blue, although it did not look so through the smoky screen. Somehow that day the oldest assistant felt like breaking through the bars and walking out into the morning sunshine.

For fifteen years, Miss Jones had been a mother to her dead sister’s child; had even, by unbelievable economies, added a year at a girls’ college. The child had been married twenty-four hours before, and there was left to Miss Jones only an aching back, a curiously empty heart, and a roll of thin, white goods on the sewing machine of Mrs. Endberry’s, where she boarded, and where, on Saturday nights, she stayed with the twins while Mrs. Endberry hunted up her opera glasses and her suburban ticket, and joined her hus-



"Lovely day," said John Lewis. "Yes, indeed," assented Miss Jones.

band in two fifty-cent table d'hôtes and two gallery seats.

Yes, Minnie was married. It was all over. A peculiar sense of freedom heightened Miss Jones' delicate color. She laid her needle-pricked fingers on the lock of the barred window. Not that she expected to escape by that exit; but the barred window symbolized, though she scarcely thought of it in that way, her forty years of life. She was beautiful or plain, according to what you expect in a face. There were women who envied her hair, as they bought stamps and post cards—such wavy, frivolous, upstanding hair it was, though quite gray; but they probably would not have envied her the thing that painted her shadow-filled eyes and carved the indescribable wistfulness about her lips.

She turned from the barred window to the diversion of stamping the east mail that had just been dragged across the dusty floor.

"There ought to be a *law*," com-

plained the youngest assistant, in italics, as she viciously sorted a pile of square, white envelopes, against Miss Avery's taking a notion to mail her invitations the same day we get in those women's magazines. Expect it's another of her steel-engraved 'At Homes.' The Averys are certainly coming on. Expect Miss Avery'll bag one of our representative young men!"

The youngest chuckled, arranged her back hair, and went on with the square envelopes. "I'm no Sherlock Holmes," she confided to Miss Jones, who still stamped

the east mail with its circular legend, "but I bet I know who she's got her eye on. John Henry Lewis, of the Riverdale National Bank. Finance, that's what Miss Avery has a loving eye on! With nobody but his mother to buy Easter bunnits for, I expect he's been able to lay by a quarter now and then. Saw them walking together down Main Street this morning. But John Henry! Oh!"

The screen door opened, letting in a sample of suburban cinders and the assistant cashier of the Riverdale National Bank. He pushed a two-dollar bill through the half-moon opening at the bottom of Miss Jones' cage door, and requested stamps. The stamps were doubtless for mailing statements to those depositors who did not wish to face in person their eighty-six-cent balances.

"Lovely day," said John Lewis. "Yes, indeed," assented Miss Jones. He lifted his hat and went out.

Mamie started to speak, saw on Miss

Jones' face something indefinable, a light and a shadow, that every woman knows—and retreated to the far corner of the sorting room. Vaguely, Mamie supposed her father and mother to have been in love once, long ago, before her mother got so large of waist and so thin of hair. But, for the most part, Mamie believed the divine passion to be confined to the heroines and heroes of the novels from the library on Second Avenue, the golden-haired clerk of the dry-goods store across the street, and herself.

"*Miss Jones!*" she marveled, "*Miss Jones!*"

Yes—Miss Jones. Every day or two for ten years, John Lewis had stood for a fleeting moment looking at her in her cage, had bought stamps, and remarked about the weather according as his mother was able or not to walk out. For ten years, Miss Jones had taken a portion of her salary, walked into the bank, and looked at him for a fleeting moment in *his* cage; and he had written the amount in her bank book and said, "Thank you, Miss Jones. Guess it's going to be spring soon"—or "fall," or "summer," or "winter"—and Miss Jones had replied: "Change in the weather, isn't it?" or, "This cold spell does hang on!"

The day John Henry had been the age of the golden-haired clerk across the street, he was giving decent burial to his darling ambition for a college course and a legal career—politics—statesmanship—there really was no limit in those days to John Lewis' dreams; he was struggling with the affairs of his father, who had left them somewhat straitened when he had been summoned in haste on his long journey; and, spending every possible moment with the stricken woman, distraught in her sudden widowhood. Gradually the young man had got used to his concentrated toil, to pushing from him the insistent hopes that had kept him awake at night; but his mother had not grown accustomed to her loss. And her need of his strong, young arm had been constant, perhaps too demanding. He was the only son of a widow.

Then, after a few years, they had moved to a distant city, and he had been able quite effectually to silence the old whisperings in his heart, and to forget the shadowy girl faces that had smiled in his young man's dreams.

The years had passed. His mother had needed the balm of his constant presence for her unhealed wound—And one day he had noticed that his shoulders drooped a little, and that his hair was quite gray.

When he had come to the Riverdale bank, it had not occurred to any one that he might once have been young.

"Say, Miss Jones," said Mamie, "isn't this your afternoon off?"

Miss Jones nodded, and stamped the last of the east mail. "I think," said she, "I'll go into the city this afternoon. I haven't been in for a year, except once to buy Minnie's wedding dress. They have tickets to rent, don't they, at the cigar store?"

"A year! Good gracious, Miss Jones! A year! Why, I couldn't *live* without going shopping every week! I don't always *buy* much, but I can *see* things! What you going to do—go't the matinée? Say, John Drew's in town! Mm, I love him! I was reading that he isn't a young man at all. I don't believe it! He just couldn't make love like that if he wasn't!"

Miss Jones did not know, but she supposed he couldn't.

Miss Jones went in on the one-thirty, dressed up in different jabot and shoes. She loved pretty clothes—but so did her sister's child. Well, that was all over now, and in another month she would have some clothes herself—colors, perhaps something pink. After all, she reflected, perhaps she looked well enough to go to the matinée alone. It was different when one went alone.

She made her way timidly down the aisles of crowded cars. Plainly, every one was going to the city to hear and see John Drew make love. The fact cried out to Miss Jones in light dresses, white kid gloves, plume-weighted hats, and bunches of violets. But then, none who were so festively gowned were alone. In her neat, black skirt, neat,

white waist, and neat little hat, she found, on the long seat at the end of the car, a place big enough for one small person, and she sat down—opposite Miss Avery and Mr. Lewis, of the National Bank. He lifted a new derby with a newly gloved hand. Miss Avery smiled in a manner appropriate to one who has just mailed one hundred and fifty invitations.

The two were beyond a doubt on pleasure bent. It could mean nothing else, the faultless costume of the well-preserved young woman, the gestures with her white finger tips, the three-syllabled words in which she conversed. The affair was, moreover, patently premeditated. Witness the candy box reposing on his well-creased knee, and caressed suggestively by his gray-suede hand.

Miss Jones did not go to the matinée. She went over to the stores, looked at clothes she would love to wear—in forty years no one had ever guessed how frivolous she really was—bought a doily for Minnie, two purple cotton-flannel dogs that barked when you punched them, for the Endberry twins, and went back to the place where she boarded.

That night she kept waking with a sudden fear that she would not get Minnie's wedding dress done, fear that she would be late to the matinée. Vaguely, through her unquiet sleep, ran a dream—a dream that she had stolen a pink dress from a store window, and candy out of a shiny, white box tied with gold cord.

The next day it was a rather nervous Miss Jones who stamped the east mail and connected Riverdale with the great world.

The youngest assistant was serious, too. The golden-haired clerk loved her. He had told her so the night before at the dance. They loved each other—now. But to-morrow? Mamie had caught a vision of middle age. She might even live to be forty. There might come a drab hour when her looking-glass would tell her a different story; when the clerk—of course he wasn't always going to be a clerk—would be less golden. Her father's hair,

why, she couldn't remember when it had not been gray, when he had not twinkled at her out of spectacled eyes, with little wrinkles around them! Then, after years and years, there might be children. Her oldest sister had married a clerk, and they had children. Then that possible family of children might have colic and teeth—her sister's children did—and her sister didn't wear fashionable clothes any more, or know about the new novels and plays, and they never went places evenings. No, Mamie never could do it! She would tell him so, and they would just be friends.

It was into such an atmosphere that Mr. John Lewis appeared. He pushed a two-dollar bill through Miss Jones' barred window, and said he would like postal cards, and wasn't it a pleasant morning. When two hundred post cards had been carefully counted out, he stammered in confusion, "Post cards? Oh! Yes! Why, did I say post cards? I meant to say stamps—if it wouldn't be too much trouble." It would not be too much trouble. However, he lingered. "By the way," said he, "I—a little personal matter—I'm called out of town—for a week, on some business for the bank, and—you see—it's my mother. She has never been alone at night, and I—really am at a loss to know—Mrs. Endberry has told mother about your taking care of her children—and it occurred to me that you might be able to stay with my mother. She's a little—nervous—and I would like to leave her with some quiet person."

The Quiet Person thought she might manage it. Beginning that night? Yes—she believed she could. He went out, leaving a large rectangle of stamps behind him.

Mrs. Lewis had not, she complained to the Quiet Person, been able to sleep for a week, in dread of John's leaving, and she knew that she wouldn't sleep while he was gone. She was evidently very nervous, as she took Miss Jones' neat little hat and neat little satchel, and invited her to make herself at home. Though both women had lived in the



Mrs. Lewis laughed as she had not laughed in years.

same town for ten years, they had known each other only to bow solemnly in passing.

But the Quiet Person had brought an unusually lovely rose out of Mrs. Endberry's vegetable garden—it had happened to be blooming right beside an onion. Wasn't that odd? And the rose had to be put in water, and a proper vase had to be selected for it and a proper place to set it, and a certain crocheted doily had to be found to go under it; and so the June rose broke the ice.

Then, directly, the supper was ready; and Miss Jones had never eaten such marmalade, and Mrs. Lewis was glad to have some one enjoy creamed potatoes with her, because John didn't care for them. John liked them every other way. He was really a wonderfully easy man to cook for—where would he be now—maybe Ohio? No, Miss Jones, who daily looked upon that masterpiece of art, the map of these United States, thought not.

All at once the day was over. The sun dropped down behind the Congregational church. A cool breeze came in at the windows, and the voices of little children, in their last, just-before-bedtime play.

The two women went into the parlor. Mrs. Lewis couldn't sit out after supper, because she had rheumatism. In a shadowy corner was an old square piano.

"Could you—oh, could you sing?" begged the old lady. "My husband sang."

"I don't sing at all well," said Miss Jones. "I used to sing when I was a girl—I took lessons, and I was going to be—but just then my sister died and I took her little girl, Minnie—but I, really I'd love to try this dear old piano!"

She sang; and it happened that she sang an old love ballad that John's father had sung at the same piano fifty years before—"on such a night as this." The old lady sat very still, her hands

folded in her lap. And then, after a while, Mrs. Lewis gave a great sigh—not, perhaps, altogether an unhappy one—and it was time for bed.

"I retire very early," said Mrs. Lewis, "but I don't sleep well, ever, and I know I shan't sleep a wink to-night."

"Oh, I believe you will," said the Quiet Person. "I'm sure of it."

They put out the cat and locked up. Twice they made sure of the windows and doors, and three times of the pantry window, because that was where a burglar got into the Avery house. Did Miss Jones know Miss Avery? No; just to speak. Didn't Miss Jones think Miss Avery dressed beautifully? Miss Jones had noticed. The side door had no chain, but they secured it by means of the ironing board, extending it from beneath the knob diagonally downward, until it met a line of chairs that ran across the room.

Mrs. Lewis laughed as she had not laughed in years. "It looks," said she, "like the game of post office! Did you ever play it?" Miss Jones believed she had when she was quite a young girl. And then they went upstairs, to Mrs. Lewis' room.

The older woman wondered at the silver-brown mass that rippled down over Miss Jones' shoulders.

"And it's all your own!" she said. "Why, it's like a mane! And it comes way down—why, I believe you could sit on it!" The Quiet Person demonstrated, and they laughed merrily over the childish trick. Then Miss Jones admired the arms and throat whose beauty had survived threescore years and ten. Miss Jones herself was quite thin.

"But, oh, your hair!" envied the older woman. "I always wanted curly hair! Really, you know I've always thought God might have started women a little more evenly as regards looks—Miss Avery has a real nice head of hair, but sometimes I wonder if it is all her own. I never was so curious over anything!"

They put out the light, put up the shades, fixed the burglar catches, and giggled to think how funny it would be

if a burglar, a fat burglar, say, should try to squeeze through the narrow space; after some argument, and the recounting of the Avery burglar affair, and others of more harrowing nature, they locked themselves into the big room and lay down, side by side.

"My, I'm sleepy!" yawned John's mother. "I believe it was laughing so! I don't know when I've had such a spell of laughing. Oh, didn't those chairs look funny!" At the memory, they laughed with quite as much hysterical abandon as if they had been sixteen, at a boarding school. Before they slept, they figured out to a nicety just where John would be at that time.

His mother raised herself on her elbow, and, in the white moonlight, looked at the watch that his father had given her the day their son was born.

"Half past nine! Mercy! I don't know when I've been up so late, and I'm sleepy as I can be! And listen to the people up yet! That's Mammie Leffling's laugh. She's got a beau. I guess they're awfully fond of each other—Ah, well, how the years pass! It doesn't seem possible that it's fifty years since I—since we—"

It was a wonderful week, that week that John Lewis went East. The Quiet Person never had had a mother since a far-distant day that she could just dimly remember. And Mrs. Lewis never had had a daughter except for a very little while—The little lost child had not been spoken of for thirty years. No, she had not been forgotten. And they figured that she would be just the age of Miss Jones—exactly, to the very day. Out of the bottom of a box, deep in the bottom of a great drawer, came, after thirty years, a picture of the little girl who had lived six years. But it wasn't really a good picture of her—she was prettier than that—such rosy cheeks and golden curls!—and something about her eyes—you can't get those things in a picture—

Morning, noon, and evening before supper time, the Quiet Person knit on a shawl for Mrs. Lewis. *Pale pink?* Mrs. Lewis held up unbelieving hands. Why, did Miss Jones know how old

she was? Seventy! Oughtn't she to have black or some shade of purple? Well, then, if Miss Jones thought it looked appropriate—of course, she had always loved that shade of shell pink—but she hadn't worn colors for a long time. She had got out of the way of it so many years ago—

"Such a man my husband was!" she said. "Not at all like other men, you know! That's what made it so hard. And I don't get used to it! Sometimes I think I've asked too much of John—it came to me like a shock the other day—to see how gray he's getting. But you know, when his father died, it seemed as if something in me died, too. I didn't want to keep John from going out into the world, and I kept saying to myself, 'I'll brace up—I'll not be so weak in a little while—but I've never got used to it! You see, my husband was part of me—and part of me died—you wouldn't know, of course."

In the evening, the Quiet Person sang at the old piano, always ending with the ballad of other days, by request.

Then came the night that Mrs. Lewis sat out in the evening, quite regardless of the dew glistening like silver on the lilac leaves.

"Why, how warm this shawl is!" she exclaimed. "I don't feel the least bit chilled. I don't know as I will need to stay in so evenings. And to-night, just before I go in, you could, if you will, sing me—the old song— This shell pink was his favorite color—Now, if there aren't Mamie Leffling and her young man! They don't seem in a hurry, do they? It doesn't seem possible that it's fifty years since we—"

"Well," said Mamie Leffling the next morning at the post office, "I expect you had a time with the old lady Lewis! They say she's awfully nervous and hard to get along with. Dear me, I can't do a thing with my hair to-day; shampooed it this morning. Dance to-night, you know. And you ought to see the roses that came for me this morning from Charlie! He certainly is an awfully good friend!" Mamie sighed.

Mrs. Endberry, after a week's constant companionship with the twins, was eager that night for the gay city. And Miss Jones, embroidering at the sitting-room table, jumped nervously at strange sounds about the house. She had started the embroidery for Minnie; but to-night, in a reckless orgy of selfishness, she decided to keep it for herself. Excited and pink-cheeked, she leaned over the occasion of her moral defeat, and at last forgot the burglary at the Averys'.

There was a ring at the door. At first she thought she would not open it. Then she decided that her breathing would be heard across the street. So, quietly putting the chain on the door, she opened it five inches, and saw John Lewis.

She ushered him in, wondering if she had left anything at his mother's. Mentally, she inventoried the contents of her little black satchel, and could think of nothing, unless—yes, there were some hairpins. But John Lewis produced no hairpins.

"Mother has a caller," he said, "so I thought I would run over—and thank you for taking such good care of her while I was gone."

It took him some time to give thanks. They talked about the great city where he had been; and from there it was an easy journey over the rest of America. There were so many places where they had never been. From geography to history is but a step. From history to art is quite a jump, but it can be done; and every one knows that art and music are on the same street. They got as far as Victrolas, when a sound came from upstairs, a sound unlike anything in the world.

That is the way Miss Jones knew it was croup. For Mrs. Endberry had said that if the twins, after being asleep for a few hours, and apparently well during the day, sat up, gasping for breath, with a peculiar, barking sound at the inhalation—that was croup. It was on page 251 of "The Care of the Baby." Miss Jones was upstairs in an incredibly short minute, and found the description cruelly accurate.



Together they administered a little white pill.

"Mr. Lewis!" her startled voice came down to him, "bring—box—marked—croup, quick! Pantry. Left side. Second shelf from bottom. Behind jelly glass." Thus the first assistant to a United States postmaster.

John Lewis, accustomed to keeping people's bank balances labeled and neatly pigeonholed in his head, found box marked croup, and went up, three steps at a time. Together they administered a little white pill.

"Every ten minutes, if necessary," said Miss Jones, like a phonograph. A second was necessary, but a third was not.

"There!" she breathed, laying the weary child on his white pillow. "There! And I know the other twin'll have it! They never miss having things together."

The other twin gave a little experi-

mentative cough, decided it was too much trouble, turned over, thrust a very pink, very fat foot against Mr. Lewis' vest buttons, and went on gritting his teeth.

"He had too much supper," explained Miss Jones. "He's a little pig."

Gingerly, Mr. Lewis took the little pig's foot in his hand and inserted it beneath the cover, on which many rabbits, equidistant, kept solemn watch.

They went downstairs.

"Thank goodness!" said Miss Jones weakly, "that's over!"

The man was vaguely aware, somewhere, of a sense of thankfulness that the second white pill had worked—and yet—the season upstairs had been, perhaps, the happiest moments of his life.

Somehow it was not so easy to take up the subject of Victrolas. He took up her embroidery and admired it ig-

norantly. What patient people women were, to be sure! And what was it for? It appeared that it could be used as a centerpiece. Or a cushion cover. Or, with ribbon run through, it became utilitarian, and was perfectly adequate to hold more embroidery.

The telephone rang. In a few moments Miss Jones came from it, blushing a little, to say that his mother had said that Miss Avery was going to stay all night with her, and the key was under the mat at the side door. Miss Jones' conscience did not compel her to add that his mother had said for him not to hurry.

"I see Miss Avery's invitations are out," said Mr. Lewis. "Mother was so pleased to get one. You knew she was going to be married? You know the man that owns the big farm out west of town—she's going to marry him."

Miss Jones leaned low over her embroidery and found something very funny therein.

"Why," said John Lewis, "couldn't you make me something like that to carry money in when I go in to the clearing house? An embroidered bag, now, would certainly fool the holdup man, wouldn't it? And it wouldn't be much more ladylike than carrying a white candy box tied with gold cord!" It was at that point that Miss Jones' embroidery became so funny that she laughed aloud.

And all at once, before they knew it, they were talking about themselves. Gradually, oh, very gradually, they ushered each other into the Closed Room where Youth was. The woman had little to tell—just a few music lessons—and a voice—and then Minnie—and the post office—that was all.

And he told her about himself, his dreams when he was a little boy, a young man—things he had never told his mother—the insignificant person he had come to be, the multitude of great things he had meant to do, and had not—

And the wonder of it was that Miss Jones had known all about it—and had for twenty years! She had had it from

an old teacher of his who, along with a very mediocre ability in reading Latin and German, could see right down into a person's heart, and read it word for word! Miss Jones knew! Burying his ideal, he had become one. This has happened before, but it is the miracle of the world.

"If only I had known!" said he.

"If I had been a man," said the Quiet Person, "I would have told you long ago. But, you see, I am just a woman."

They sat quite silent after that—such a comfortable silence—the quiet room—the rose-shaded lamp—the gray-haired girl with her embroidery—the two asleep upstairs—the purple cotton-flannel dogs, now loved the more because of their pitiful inability to bark when punched—

"Do—the Endberrys leave this very often?" he asked. "I should think this was about the best ever."

"Well," laughed she, "it's a funny thing about that. You see, the twins, well, they're pretty strenuous, and Mrs. Endberry says sometimes she thinks she'll just fly to pieces if she can't get away from the twins and—everything for a while. But about the end of the second act she begins to worry for fear something has happened to them, and she always wants to leave early and hurry to the ten-thirty train. But Mr. Endberry won't do it, because there's really no need of it, you know."

"So they come home at twelve, and Mrs. Endberry says: 'There! That's positively the last time I leave those blessed babies for seven hours at a stretch! Are they all right?' And she runs up with her theater hat, and opera bag, and everything, and she leans over them and feels of their foreheads—and pulls the covers up a little—or turns them back a little—and—" Miss Jones stopped for the very simple reason that she could not go on. There was a curious lump in her throat. She leaned over her embroidery.

"Well! well!" said John Lewis, looking at the back of his hand. It was a subject upon which he was really not versed. Then, looking up at Miss

Jones' hair, which had become attractively disarranged during the incident upstairs, he happened to glance at the clock.

"Why, it's *half past eleven!* I had no idea!"

They stood at the open door, Miss Jones not knowing that a lady should bid adieu to her gentleman caller in the drawing-room, and let him find his opera hat, coat, stick, and gloves by himself. But then there was only a derby.

They stood at the door. It was a night in June, and moonlight touched everything with glory. The world grows old, but now, in its middle age, its June nights are like the Eden of its youth. They happened to glance at each other and saw it in each other's eyes—the oldest and the newest thing in the universe, the simplest, the most mysterious. They stood so, for one perfect moment, looking at it, in silence.

That is why Mamie Leffling and the clerk, just returning from the dance, walked once again around the block. That is why the clerk, when he let himself into his hired room that night, walked on magic air and did not see the warped oilcloth on the floor; that

is why, the next morning, Mamie's mother saw it in her daughter's eyes and cried, "Oh, my dear, my dear! And you were a baby only yesterday! You won't feel the same a year from now." And the girl, out of the incomparable wisdom of twenty years and a summer's night, whispered back: "But I'll love him, mother. It won't be the same—no, I suppose it'll be different, but something will last. You—why, you love daddy, don't you, mother?"

And Mamie's mother, with a sudden rush of tears, protested, "Love, child! Love! You don't know anything about it!"

John Lewis hung his hat on the varnished deer's left-hand antler, and stepped back from the square of moonlight.

"Mary," he said—"mother says your name is Mary—you won't mind my calling you that?—I haven't got a life worth enough to offer to such a woman as you, but, somehow, to-night, I find it hard to look ahead without you."

"I have loved you," said the woman, unashamed, "for twenty years."

In wonder and reverence he kissed her. "We missed our youth," said he, "but we'll grow old together."



A Partnership

NO single rood of ground I own,
Yet share a precious acre near
My tiny room—a garden, sown
To some new beauty all the year.
From primrose time to primrose time,
Something to set my heart a-chime.

My busy neighbor sets for me,
Unknowingly, warm bulbs that lie
A while asleep, and then set free
Tall flags, that poignant blue the sky
Holds in midsummer; or the slim
Narcissus, with its silver rim.

I could not, like my neighbor, go
Long hours to tend this tillage fair,
Nor have I wealth to help it grow.
I may not pluck, but I may share,
Gleaning the tints, the fragrance nigh.
Her partner in delight am I!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.

The September Santa Claus

By
Edith Summers
Updegraff

Author of "The Primrose Party Dress," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
G. C. PUGSLEY

WHEN I found a box of Somebody-or-other's best chocolate creams, addressed in beautiful old-English lettering "To the Brown-eyed One in Pink," reposing on my window sill one glorious September morning, I was surprised and pleased. Theodosia, my cousin and roommate, was also surprised and pleased; for, though she has no use whatever for young men, she adores chocolate creams. Sticking my head out of the window to see if I could discover any signs of the unknown who had come bearing gifts, I sensed something moving, out of the corner of my eye, and, turning my head, saw Vivian Pringle, whose room is next door to ours, taking in a box from her window sill.

"Holy cats! What sort of a September Santa Claus is in our midst?" I asked Theo, slightly nettled, to tell the truth, at finding that I was not the only one. And, receiving no satisfactory reply, I went, accompanied by the box and Theodosia, to Vivian's room.

"What did *you* draw, Vivian?" I asked, handing her what was left of my chocolate creams.

"Well, for goodness sake! Did *you*



"I showed Theo a note that I had written to our joint benefactor."

get something, too? Why, how queer!" exclaimed Vivian, with ill-concealed annoyance, and somewhat hesitatingly she displayed a beautiful cluster of American Beauty roses. "And the lettering is exactly the same," she continued, in bewilderment. "Only yours is unmistakably intended for you, and mine for me. Why, it's the strangest thing I ever heard of—except, of course, my dress isn't really red; it's cerise. But, then, one can't expect men to know those things."

While Vivian was thus lost in surmises, Theo and I examined the inscription on the slip of paper that had accompanied her box and found that it read, in the same beautiful old-English lettering: "To the Black-haired One in Red."

"Anyway," said Vivian, with considerable satisfaction in her tone, "if this turns out to be a sell, you'll be in on it as much as I."

Vivian's remark referred to a sad occurrence that had happened the term before—the incident of the lavender notes. For weeks she had received love letters, written on beautiful lavender note paper, from an anonymous admirer, and had built up a beautiful romance around him. And then I had blighted it all by discovering—quite accidentally—that the anonymous lover was none other than the college milk boy. This had so humbled Vivian's pride that it was as much as three weeks before she confided another secret to me. Considering the rather strained relations that had existed between us ever since the milk-boy episode, it seemed a rather queer freak of fate that just we two should have been selected out of the whole school to become rivals under such peculiar circumstances. I stood there for some time munching chocolate creams, and wondering about it. And I guess Vivian did some wondering, too.

"I tell you what we'll do, Vivian," I said suddenly. "We'll work independently this time, and whoever discovers him first will come and tell the other. And, as you say, if it's a sell, it'll be on both of us. Only we must report to each other every day—everything. If there's going to be any holding back and stealing marches and so on, I won't play."

"All right," assented Vivian. "But I wonder—"

"What do you wonder?"

"I wonder why he's sending presents to *both* of us—and which one he wants to really *reach*."

"That's one of the things we're to find out. It's not so simple this time as—"

The first breakfast bell rang before I could finish the unkind remark, and Theo and I, who were still in our kimonos, made a dive for our room.

That day I spent quite a lot of time and thought on the chocolate creams and their sender; and when evening

came, and we were in our rooms, supposed to be studying. I showed Theo a note that I had written to our joint benefactor. It read:

DEAR SEPTEMBER SANTA CLAUS: I'm not very keen about chocolate creams; although, of course, they're not bad to take. But I'm afraid you've been reading stories about boarding schools, where the inmates live on fudge and pickles. They don't really, though; or, at any rate, they wouldn't if they could get anything else. Now, what I like is real human food—green corn and tomatoes and porterhouse steaks and things like that. If you should happen to feel philanthropic again, I'd be ever so much obliged if you'd bear that in mind. Yours with appetite,

THE BROWN-EYED ONE IN PINK.

"But how about *me*?" mourned Theo. "You know I *love* chocolate creams."

"I tell you, Theo, we'll put a postscript: P. S.—My roommate *loves* chocolate creams."

"But it all sounds so greedy," commented Theo. "And I'm sure it isn't right to take things from strangers. I'd rather not have the chocolate creams at all."

"Nonsense!" I answered briskly. "If it gives him or her or it any pleasure to give us things, it's our duty to take them. Oh, yes; and there's another important postscript I must put in," I added hastily, and began to scribble. When it was done I showed it to Theo:

Also, I should be glad to lighten your labors by saving you the steep and somewhat slippery climb of the sloping porch roof that approaches our window. If you should pass this way again, you will see for yourself how I have arranged this.

"What do you mean by that?" inquired Theodosia, when she had read it.

"I mean this," I answered. And I went to the clothes closet, and brought out a covered market basket in a pretty good state of preservation, and a long piece of clothesline.

"I swiped these from the kitchen this afternoon while you were at gym," I explained. "Before we go to bed I'll securely attach one end to the bedpost and the other to the market basket, and dangle it gayly out of the window."

"But what if some one should see it?"

urged Theo, whose long suit is objections.

"I'll rise with the rooster and haul it up before any one gets a chance."

"But that'll be a hindrance to you in finding out who he is," persisted Theodosia. "You'll never see him. Whereas, if he climbed right up to the window, you could watch for him as you and Vivian used to watch for the milk boy."

"I don't care a hairpin who he is, Theo. I'm going to let Vivian exert herself to find that out. She's the one that's capable of romantic attachments; and if he's a Romeo, she can have him, for all of me. But if there are any good things to eat going, I want to be in on them; especially now that it's September, and everybody in the whole world is having lots of good grub except us poor St. Agatha victims."

You see, if there's one thing I like to do more than another when autumn comes around, it's eat. Of course, I can and do eat at any time. But when the leaves begin to turn, and the days get shorter, and that delightful tang of chill comes in the air, and everything is ripe and mellow and abundant, oh, what a joy it is to eat!—anywhere but in St. Agatha's Select School for Young Ladies.

In our immense, desertlike, chilly dining room, with its long tables always set in dreary uniformity, eating is the same sad business all the year round. Our cook isn't a versatile genius, and her bills of fare for the week never vary winter or summer. There are always the same grisly stews and unsavory hashes, flanked by the same soggy potatoes, and eked out either by mashed beets, boiled cabbage, or canned corn. The same two desserts grace the board—yard pudding with mucilage—a long, narrow, jelly-roll-like arrangement, with a sickeningly sweet, amber-colored sauce, alternating with fish eyes and soapsuds, a tasteless combination of tapioca and beaten white of egg. At breakfast we invariably have the same oatmeal porridge, at once burned and half cooked, and the same pale-blue liquid known as "cream."

It's so tantalizing, when we're out on our afternoon walks, to see everywhere the autumn gardens with the fat cucumbers, and big, yellow pumpkins, and luscious ripe tomatoes sunning themselves among their dried-up vines, and the ears of late corn standing out plump and silky-tipped, waiting to be picked, and the big, bloomy plums and yellow pears and fragrant apples simply rotting on the ground, there are so many of them. And oh, the smells! They're the worst of all. When we go by a house and a delicious aroma coming out from the kitchen door tells us that some happy occupant of that happy house is making spiced blackberries or chili sauce or—most maddening smell of all—tomato catsup, we nearly swoon away in our tracks.

This explains why I wrote that seemingly peculiar letter to the donor of the chocolate creams.

The morning after I had written the note and left it in the market basket, I was up, as I had planned, with the first rooster. And as I hauled the basket up, hand over hand, I knew by its weight that the September Santa Claus had called again.

When I opened it I found inside Theo's box of chocolate creams—and other things. The other things were: Half a dozen fat ears of corn, half a dozen big, ripe tomatoes, one dozen large, cream-colored peaches, one dozen blue plums of giant size, a bag of fresh mushrooms, and an enormous cut of sirloin steak about an inch and a half thick.

That night, after the teacher on the hall had done her good-night patrol duty, Theo and Vivian and I had the feed of our lives. I sneaked down to the deserted kitchen, and cooked the corn and mushrooms, and broiled the steak on the gas stove, and swiped some bread and butter from the pantry, and the whole made a noble repast. We went to bed stuffed like boa constrictors, and happy as country cats.

This blessed state of things continued for a week or more. Theo kept getting her chocolate creams, and Vivian kept getting little tokens of sentimental



"The last wagon slowly trundled around a corner."

attachment such as flowers, music, gift books, et cetera; and, best of all, I kept getting my grub. We were all gaining flesh at the rate of a pound a day, and we were all satisfied except Vivian, who, desiring to remain sylphlike, had a nightly battle between vanity and appetite, in which appetite always won; and who, to her chagrin, was no nearer discovering the identity of our admirer than she had been when she got her first bunch of American Beauties.

Then one morning I found in my basket, along with the other things, a note—old-English lettering again—which ran:

If the Brown-eyed One in Pink will go some afternoon—or morning—to the second corner on the right after turning west at the Juddville Center post office, and then walk

along the right-hand road as far as the big hickory-nut tree, and cross to the left across the blackberry pasture, she will find something which may, perhaps, interest her.

There was no signature.

"Interesting, not to say exciting," I said, when I had read it to my trusty pal, Theodosia. "I'll go and compare notes with Vivian."

I was so excited that I rushed into Vivian's room without knocking. She started and flushed, and looked rather embarrassed, and I knew at a glance what she had been doing. She had been practicing veiled looks and covert glances in front of her mirror. I had caught her at it before.

"I see you must have got one, too, Vivian, because you're getting ready for it."

"Getting ready for what?" inquired Vivian hotly. "I don't know what you mean. Anyway, I'm not doing anything of the sort."

"Here it is!" I cried triumphantly, and drew the note from under her hand mirror. "Naughty, naughty! You tried to steal a march on me, and get first chance at him. Don't you remember the terms of our agreement?"

"Of course, I was going to show it to you," said Vivian, with well-feigned exasperation. "But why can't you give me time? I only got it myself about three minutes ago."

If the Black-haired One in Red will go some afternoon—or morning—to the second corner on the right after turning west at the Juddville Center post office, and then walk along the right-hand road as far as the big hickory-nut tree, and cross to the left across the blackberry pasture, she will find something which may, perhaps, interest her.

I showed Vivian the one I had got. "I tell you, Vivian," I said, "we'll go together. It's the only fair and square thing to do."

This, I knew, was exactly what Vivian did not want. She wanted to beat me to that anonymous Romeo, and get him prepossessed in her favor. I didn't care a burned match about her old Romeo, but it got my Irish up to have her try to outwit me in that underhand way. So I decided to make a stand for my rights.

"But how could we possibly go to that place?" asked Vivian, with half-real, half-assumed helplessness. "We could never get away for an afternoon, or even part of it, without being missed, even if we managed to get outside the grounds without any one's seeing us, which is quite unlikely."

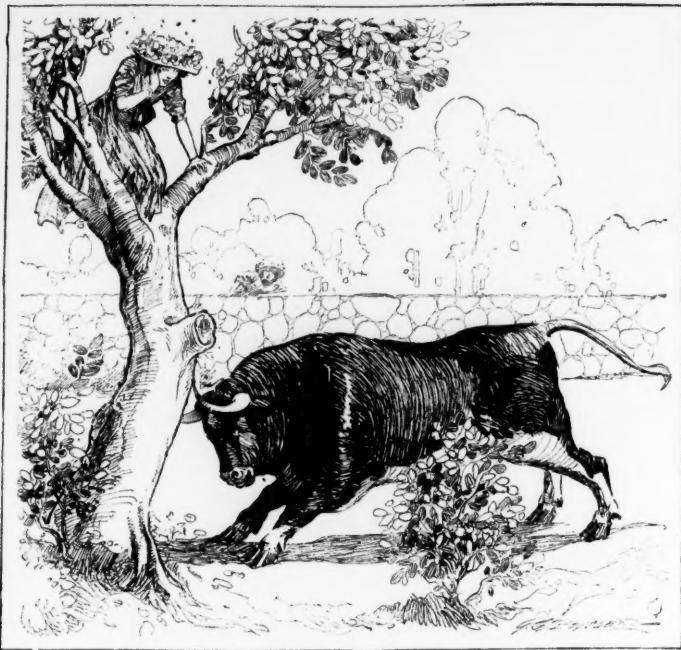
"Leave it to me, Vivian; I'll set my giant intellect working on it, and find out a way," said I, beginning to pace up and down the room with my arms folded behind me, in imitation of the great Napoleon planning a campaign.

"I know what will save us!" I exclaimed at last, in a sudden burst of inspiration. "The picnic!" And I went on to explain to her how we could take advantage of it.

Every autumn within the memory of man, the whole school has been treated to a picnic at the Juddville Lake. It's one of the events of the year, which we look forward to for weeks and months ahead of time; and this year it was to take place on the twenty-sixth, which was the approaching Saturday. It would be the great chance for Vivian and me; we could slip away and pretend we got lost, and have nearly a whole day to do just as we liked in.

I suppose nobody but an inmate of a penitentiary or an insane asylum can realize what it means to a girl in boarding school to have just that—a whole day to do as she likes in. Some girls like to do one thing, and some another; but none of them, except perhaps some occasional pin-headed little prig, likes to meander through the dull old routine day after day. Everybody in the school, except Vivian and me, was in a flutter of excitement about the picnic. And Vivian and I were in a flutter of excitement about escaping from the picnic; for even a picnic, at St. Agatha's, is a staid affair.

The morning of the picnic day came at last, a glorious, blue-and-gold September morning, just the kind we had been praying for, and we were all packed into wagons along with the ham sandwiches and the hard-boiled eggs and the cold coffee and the ginger ale. Vivian and I, in accordance with a pre-arranged plan, were careful to get stowed side by side in the back seat of a wagon that brought up the tail of the procession. There was a lot of fussing and squeezing and shoving and squabbling to get sitting next to Ethel or Maud, and appealing to teachers, and racing back upstairs to find out why Daisy hadn't appeared yet, and why Frieda was so late, and searching for lost sweaters and cameras and field glasses. But finally we were all more or less peacefully ensconced, and the man driving the first wagon said "git-ap" to his horses, and then the drivers all along the line said "git-ap" to their horses, and finally the man driving the last wagon said "git-ap" to *his* horses, and we were off.



"I saw the bull rampaging and bellowing and pawing the ground under the apple tree."

"Why did you put on that red walking dress, Vivian?" I asked, surveying her critically. "It's too good for a picnic; you're almost sure to have it ruined."

"It isn't red; it's cerise," corrected Vivian, fidgeting a little. "Why did you wear that pink dress?"

"But it isn't my walking dress; it's an old one."

"Well, it's pink," said Vivian significantly.

"What's the use of our pretending?" I laughed. "We both wanted to be dressed in character; and I had another pink dress, but you didn't have another red one, so you had to wear your best."

"It isn't red; it's cerise," came the old refrain from Vivian.

We made our dash for liberty as the wagons were painfully climbing a steep hill not far from where we knew the Juddville Center post office was situ-

ated. Juddville Center, by the way, consists of a post office, a schoolhouse, and a cemetery. As our wagon came opposite a thick clump of elderberry bushes, I nudged Vivian.

"Now or never!" I whispered hurriedly. "Remember, the back of Opportunity's head is bald!" I climbed over the wagon box, and darted like a scared rabbit into the clump of elderberry bushes.

Vivian was there almost as soon as I was. For one ordinarily so romantic and ladylike, she gave a better imitation of a tomboy than I had expected. As we peered anxiously out from behind our screen of elderberry bushes, we saw with satisfaction that no one had noticed our escape. No halt was called; not a head was turned; not a voice was raised. Accompanied by nothing but its picknicky hum and flutter, the last wagon slowly trundled around a corner.

We waited for several seconds after it had disappeared, before we ventured cautiously out into the road again.

"We'll follow slowly behind," suggested Vivian, "until we come to the post office. Then we can branch off and be free of them."

"That would never do," I objected. "They might miss us at any minute, and send somebody back to look for us. And if we go along the road, we'll meet them face to face. No, Vivian; it's cross country for ours. I know the way; and this is as good a place as any to strike in."

We clambered over a stone fence into a meadow, crossed it, worried our way through a piece of thick woods cluttered with underbrush, with Vivian panting and peevish in the rear, crawled through a barbed-wire fence upon which both Vivian and I tore our dresses, jumped a creek, and finally came out in a big field of corn from which we could see the Juddville Center post office and the roads leading away from it.

"Look, Vivian! There she goes!" I cried, pointing up the main road. There, enveloped in a cloud of dust, was that last wagon, in which we had been so lately incarcerated, slowly disappearing into the horizon line.

"Hurrah! We're free; we're free; we're free!" I shouted, and threw the cow breakfast I was wearing up into the air, and turned three handsprings, and finally cavorted off through the cornfield in the direction of the Juddville Center post office.

Having reached said post office, we turned west up a straggly, little-traveled road, and proceeded to the second corner on the right, as directed. The road that branched off at this second corner turned out to be an enchanting little country lane, winding in and out and up and down in the most fascinating way, and bordered by big, flaming maples and beautiful, slender, white-stemmed birches.

But we didn't notice the scenery much. We were too busy looking for the big hickory-nut tree, which we soon found without any difficulty. It stood

in the middle of a clear space, gigantic and solitary, and to mark it all the more surely, there was an unmistakable blackberry field lying to the left of it.

"This must be the place," said Vivian, peering into the blackberry field with a combination of curiosity and suspicion. "So far, the directions have been real ones, anyway."

We crawled under a barbed-wire fence into the field, and began to cross it. The blackberries in that field turned out to be the biggest and blackest and juiciest that I had ever tasted, and, in spite of my eagerness to unravel our mystery, I began to get interested in them.

"Gee!" I exclaimed to Vivian, with my mouth most unmannerly full, "if we only had a basket or a pail or something we could take back enough blackberries to keep us stuffed full for a week."

"Oh, never mind about the blackberries," impatiently answered Vivian, who is above material things. "Let's go on and find out."

But the blackberries were too much for me. I kept picking and eating, and eating and picking, and racing from one bush to another, and wearing Vivian's patience to a frazzle. All at once, as I was stuffing an especially luscious handful into my mouth, my ear was smitten by a scream of pure terror from Vivian.

"A bull, a bull!" she yelled. And I turned in time to see her red dress darting madly across the landscape. At the same time there came a series of angry bellowings, and the crackling of breaking underbrush; and, sure enough, there, not a hundred yards from us, was a full-grown, able-bodied bull, bearing down rapidly on Vivian's red dress.

"It's all on account of that red dress!" I exclaimed involuntarily.

"It isn't red; it's cerise!" shrieked Vivian as involuntarily, as she streaked away.

But that vulgar bull didn't know cerise from red, for he kept right on a-comin'.

"Quick, Vivian; that old apple tree!" I yelled, beginning to be really afraid

for her. "Shin up it, and get good and high away from his horns."

The old apple tree, a survivor of some former orchard, was standing right in the path of Vivian's flight, and up it she scrambled with an agility born of terror. I saw no reason why I should climb the tree, too; the bull was taking no apparent notice of me, and if we got stalled up there, we might have to stay all day. So I dashed off in the direction of the nearest fence, with the idea of getting some one to come and drive off the bull and rescue her. Looking back from the edge of the pasture, I saw the bull ramping and bellowing and pawing the ground under the apple tree. But a bright red—I mean cerise—spot high up in the branches showed me that Vivian had climbed well out of his reach.

The piece of woods in which I now found myself was thick and swampy, and piled knee-high with underbrush and fallen trees, which made my progress slow and difficult, and my feet exceedingly wet and soppy. After struggling and stumbling about for what seemed like hours, I began to suspect that perhaps I had been going around in a circle all the time. Tired and discouraged, I sat down on a log to get my breath.

I was preparing to rise up and renew the battle, when suddenly I stopped breathing, and listened intently. Yes, there was no doubt about it; it was a voice, a human voice; and it was singing. It was too far away for me to distinguish the words, but I knew the tune; there was no mistaking: "Hark, hark, the lark."

I listened for a few seconds, trying carefully to locate the exact direction from which the sounds came. Then I got up and began to fight my way toward them with renewed hope.

Suddenly I stopped in consternation; the singing had stopped, too. My heart sank like a chunk of lead, and hope died. I was tired and disappointed enough to weep. But I didn't.

Quite unexpectedly the singing came again, and I lost no time in starting up and struggling madly toward it. This

time it was "Auld Robin Grey," and I was overjoyed to find that I could hear the words quite distinctly. In a few minutes I had actually come to the edge of the woods. Before me lay a field full of blueberry bushes, and beyond that a beautiful, green meadow bordered by tall trees.

I crossed the blueberry field, still following the voice, which now was unmistakably near, came out into the meadow, and looked around for the singer. He was nowhere to be seen.

I walked all around the meadow, looking among the trees and bushes that fringed it, but found no one. It was all one warm, sunny, empty quiet, except for the mysterious voice.

I now noticed something that I had been too flustered to care about before—namely, that the voice was an exceedingly pleasant one—a strong, vibrant, musical baritone. I began to wonder who in Juddville could sing like that.

A few yards from me, towering high above all the other trees that fringed the meadow, stood an enormous maple. I approached the foot of this maple, and peered up into the branches. Yes, away up, perilously near the top, was a dark figure perched airily on a slim bough. It was now singing:

"When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen."

"Come down!" I called peremptorily when the enchanted air had ended.

To my surprise the singer started without question to obey. I watched in nervous anxiety while he clambered briskly from airy bough to bough. Then, as he came nearer the ground, and I saw that he was out of danger, my feeling changed to curiosity, not unmixed with embarrassment. What right had I to tell him to come down, and what was I going to say to him?

Before I could answer these questions to my own satisfaction, he was standing before me, his cap in his hand, looking as embarrassed as I felt.

We stood there like two idiots for what seemed an hour, and then I managed to stammer out:



"What I want to know is which of you is the September Santa Claus."

"You—you sing wonderfully. I—I'm sorry I disturbed you."

"You needn't be," he answered. "I only climbed up there and hollered for lack of something better to do."

"What could be better?" I asked, peering covetously up at the top branch, where he had been swinging and singing like a robin.

"Taking a walk with you," he answered.

So we took a walk. We walked and walked and walked. And it never once occurred to me that I was dead tired from struggling through swamp and underbrush. In fact, I wasn't dead tired any more. In five minutes from the

time we met we were acquainted, and confiding to each other our life histories, our likes and dislikes, and our dearest ambitions. He was Yale—second year—and he was camping near there, and he liked to fish and hunt and lie in the sun and watch ant hills and sing in trees.

"What do you like to do better than anything else in the world?" he asked.

"Well," I answered, "at this time of year what I like best is to be let loose to meander along country roads, munching apples and plums and things that have dropped over the fence, and to straggle through pastures thick with big, ripe, juicy blackberries, and take off my

shoes and stockings and paddle in warm streams and drink spring water from a rusty tin cup, and then stop at the next farmhouse and ask for a drink of water, knowing that I'll get a nice glass of cider or buttermilk instead, and be chased by dogs, and shin up walnut trees, and catch rides on the back of wagons, and have a good time generally."

"The very things I like best myself!" exclaimed the Man Robin, with enthusiasm. "Let's do 'em all day! But, jumping Jehoshaphat! What's the matter with your shoes?" he added, with a sudden change of tone, dropping on his knees to the ground, and putting his hand on one of them. "Why, they're sopping wet! Why didn't you say so?"

"I—I forgot all about it," I admitted. "I got lost in that swamp on the other side of the meadow, and I guess I went in pretty deep several times."

"Come this way," said the Man Robin authoritatively, "over to my camp. You can tie on a pair of my canal boats while those shoes dry."

He led the way along a lovely little path through a pine grove, and all at once we came out upon the camp.

A mossy old log cabin, covered over with morning-glory vines, stood in a little, grass-covered clearing in the pine grove. Two hammocks swung between pine trees, a gypsy pot hung from a tripod over a gypsy fireplace, and over the door of the cabin, red upon black, in beautiful old-English lettering, was its name—"NEVERDONEATIN."

I took one look at that old-English lettering, my heart dropped into my wet shoes, and my face must have gone the color of Vivian's dress; for the Man Robin saw that he was discovered.

"Then you're not the Man Robin at all," I gasped. "You're the September Santa Claus."

"I'm both!" he admitted, blushing. "But why does that spoil things?"

What could I tell him? I couldn't explain that for the first time in my life I had been gripped in the claws of jealousy—a fierce, overpowering jealousy—and that the jealousy was of Vivian, to whom he had been sending tokens of

real, spiritual attachment—books and music and flowers and such things. Undoubtedly Vivian was the one he really cared for. And I, who had been receiving *food* from him—what a wretch I suddenly seemed to myself! How low and animal and vulgar a thing I was, anyway! All his real expression of himself had gone to Vivian.

"Well, I must say, Betty Watson, I admire the way you rescued me from that bull! Talk about heroic efforts!"

It was Vivian's thin, bell-like voice. I turned mechanically.

"I—I'm awfully sorry, Vivian," I stammered. "I got lost in a bog and wandered around for hours, and—" My voice trailed off lamely into nothing.

"Well, it's a good thing somebody was awake," said Vivian crisply. "If it hadn't been for this gentleman, who drove him off with stones—"

Still quite mechanically, I turned my head a little farther, and saw that Vivian was not alone. There was a dark, soulful-looking young man with her.

Then I felt myself being forced down into a rustic seat, and the Man Robin began gently to unlace my wet shoes. Somehow his solicitude and the discovery of the dark, soulful-looking young man made hope spring anew.

"What I want to know," I demanded, unable to stand the suspense any longer, "is which of you *is* the September Santa Claus."

"Both," explained the dark, soulful-looking young man, blushing deeply.

"You see," supplemented the Man Robin, as he drew off one soaking shoe, "old Bob does that lettering business so fine, and I write such an awful mitt myself, that I had him do mine, too. Besides—"

"Besides what?" I asked severely.

"Oh—we thought it might get you guessing a little."

"Well, it did, all right," Vivian assured him. "And, by the way," turning to the dark, soulful-looking young man, "my dress isn't red; it's cerise."

And so everything was lovely.

But there's always sure to be some sort of a fly in the ointment. Sympathize with me—his name is Gibbs!



The Man Who Knew

By Alma Martin Estabrook

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

IT was a star-blazing night, placid with spring, and sweet with the breath of village gardens. On the shadowy front porch of an old, but excellently kept, gray house, with green shutters and peacock fanlights, two elderly men sat talking, their cigars forgotten and burned out.

"You're going to leave *her*. That's what you are trying to tell me, isn't it?" one of them demanded grimly, lifting his long body out of its chair and standing, hands crowded deep into pockets, towering over his friend.

"I'm leaving her because she wants to be left," the other man replied bitterly. "She cares more for her flowers, and her garden, and her fat phaëton horse, and her grandbaby, and this confounded town than she does for me and my wishes."

"Mary has a home-keeping heart," "Colonel" James Moxley suggested remindingly. "She's always had that, Al." The colonel had been many things in the village. He was at present its auctioneer. A keen-visaged man, with a knife-blade jaw and eyes that missed nothing that came within their radius, he was, in a loose and rather undressed fashion, distinguished in appearance, dominating any group in which he found himself. "As for her being fond of this little old burg," he continued, "why shouldn't she be? We're always fond of the folks and the dumb creatures that are dependent on us, and I don't suppose there are a half dozen people here, all told, that aren't debtor to Mary's kindness and generosity."

"She is the best woman on earth,"

Alfred Wheaton remarked, a bit brokenly.

"Made you what you are," growled the colonel.

"You're exactly right," heartily agreed his friend, with a smile that broke up twinklingly all the gravity of his harried face, "but she oughtn't to object if I polish off her handiwork with a little travel, or a touch of city life. We've been buried here in Elm Grove long enough. It's time we dug our way out."

The colonel, looming big in the moonlight, stared down at him curiously, and with a touch of amusement. He was thinking what a difference there is between the barking of a chained dog and of one that has suddenly broken loose and is off in hot pursuit of—things imaginary. Wheaton had sold his general store the week before, at a price unprecedented in Elm Grove, and had now the means and the liberty to go where he chose.

"Is it the money that's upset you?" the colonel inquired caustically. "What the devil's the matter with you anyhow, Al?"

"I'll tell you what's the matter, by George!" Wheaton exclaimed, coming straight in his chair. "I'm tired of waking in the night, and hearing McCracken's rooster crow, and of knowing it's McCracken's; I'm tired of never having any hot water except what I lug around in teakettles; I'm tired of shoveling coal and ashes—or of hiring Billy Trunk to shovel 'em for me; I'm tired of bringing home meat for dinner, and of eating fried chicken and



"In other words," he observed, "you're giving this up."

mashed potatoes and vanilla ice cream every Sunday; I'm tired of old Doc Lambert's everlasting: 'Fine morning, Mr. Wheaton!' I'm tired of holding the post-office door open every evening for Waltham in his wheeled chair. Sick and tired of the whole business! My Lord, Jim, you know what I'm talking about, don't you?" he broke off vehemently. "You've felt the same thing yourself, haven't you?"

The old auctioneer dropped into his chair, and, settling himself comfortably, looked with eyes of affection at the clustering white houses of the village as they lay serenely wrapped about by the sweet-smelling night. It was the typical Middle States small town. To

swelling out his shirt fronts, a burst of red-brown beard beginning to be gray, and the expression of one who is stirred by the sudden opening of new vistas.

"Mary's going to stay with Emma Louise," he informed his visitor. Emma Louise was their only child, married, and living with her husband and baby in the next block. "It breaks me all up — her attitude in the matter. She can't understand my longing to go. She's absolutely unreasoning. We—we've had words, Jim. The first in twenty years or more." The rich, throaty voice trembled a little. "Emma Louise sides with her mother."

"She's got her mother's look-ahead

many its mediocrity would have seemed to defy competition, but the colonel had been on lifelong terms of friendliness with it. A subtle and indissoluble kinship bound him to it. His heart never passed beyond the roll of the green hills that surrounded it.

"Good enough for me," he declared, with emphasis. "Suits me to a T. Finest country possible. Clean, nice little town. As for sunshine, I don't know where you'll get any more of it, year in and year out, than right here in this valley."

"Damn the sunshine!" exploded Alfred Wheaton, springing up and taking several excited strides up and down the porch. He was a short man, rotund and ruddy, with many fine wrinkles creased by humor and squinting. He had a body that was always crowding his coats at the shoulders, and

temperament," dryly remarked the colonel.

"You mean that I'll be glad enough to come back?"

"You'll come back, all right, Al."

"I'll be hanged if I do till I've seen something of life!" thundered Wheaton, now thoroughly out of temper. "You and Mary and all the rest of you can wither and blow away if you like. I'm going to live a little before I die, by the Lord Harry!"

"Humph!" muttered the colonel. He relit his cigar, the match lighting up the lower part of the angular face, and making a blackish blur of his thick brows. He puffed slowly, thoughtfully. "In other words," he observed, "you're giving this up"—the sweep of his long arm included the dooryard, with its lilacs and maples; the garden, with thyme and spearmint and sage and boneset; the white barn, with its hay-crowded loft; the cleanly chicken coops in precise rows against a distant fence; beyond the fence, the houses of friends and neighbors; and, beyond these, cozy, green valleys and gentle slopes—"you're giving this up to join a silk-stockinged bread line at some big, unhome-like city hotel? And you're giving your wife up, along with all the rest?"

"Since she refuses to come with me, yes. It's only a temporary arrangement, of course. But since it will probably cover a good many months, we'll sell the furniture and close the house."

"Sell the furniture!" rapped out the colonel, in amazement. "I'm to come down here with my hammer and auction things off—*your things and Mary's?*"

"The first date you have open," Wheaton said briskly. "I'd like you to begin to advertise the sale at once. I'm leaving in two weeks, and I want everything attended to before I go, of course. There'll be little enough time, if we set right at it."

Colonel James Moxley came out of his chair with the vigor to have been expected in one of his physical and temperamental make-up, and strode toward the porch steps, astonishment, incredulity, *disgust* in his face, the very

stubble on his chin quivering with the fury of his emotions.

"Talk about a March hare!" he roared. "It isn't in it for a minute with you, Al! You're as crazy as old Tillie Westenberg was when they took her screaming to the asylum." With that he flung himself off, leaving his friend standing on the steps looking after him.

"A man must see something of life," Alfred Wheaton said simply to the night and to himself. "If the chance doesn't come in his youth, and he can't make it, he's got to wait for it and take it when it comes, and if—if the woman he loves refuses to take it with him, then he must go alone."

Just beyond the gate, beneath a great maple tree, the colonel met Mrs. Wheaton coming home from her daughter's. She was a tiny, erectly borne little creature, in a black silk shirt-waist suit, with white turnover collar and cuffs. Her dark hair was simply done, and in her grave, dark eyes all joy was quenched. What was happening to her was the most bewildering, the most baffling thing she had ever met.

"Al told you?" she demanded at once of the colonel.

"It beats everything!" he exclaimed profoundly.

For an instant they stood staring helplessly at each other, he bareheaded, twirling his hat, she tipping her head that she might look up at him.

"Wants to be a 'live one,' does he?" rumbled the colonel. "Thinks nothing is too good for him, now he's got the price. Kicks off Elm Grove like a spider kicks off its dirty web. Imagines—"

"Don't!" she protested urgently. "You don't understand. It isn't disloyalty to the village. It's the taste he's had of city life when he's gone to buy goods. You've no idea how much he's talked of the conveniences of the big hotels, and their attractiveness altogether." She threw out her little, work-coarsened hands in a gesture of recoil. "I've tried them, too. I've gone with him so many times, and I've always fairly sickened for home! The last

time it seemed to me I'd just—*die* if I had to stay a day longer."

Her eyes entreated him to understand. Was she mistaken in her reluctance to try to sink her roots in soil so alien, so little fitted to her nourishment? they seemed to demand of him.

"City life is so confusing and so very tiring to me!" she defended pathetically. "Like a big masquerade where everybody is aping somebody else, and all are so tired, and indifferent, and bored. Of course, it must have another side, but that's the side I always see. And how could I exchange the people I love and am used to for chambermaids, and the girls behind the onyx news stands in the hotels, and the manicurists and hairdressers Al would send me to? They're all the women I'd meet. He doesn't realize it, but it's so. I'd wait, afternoon after afternoon, for people who wouldn't come—the wives of the men he buys goods from and of others he has met in a business way; or if they came they'd sit for a few minutes in fly-away fashion on the edges of their chairs, looking me over and making polite talk, and I'd wish they hadn't come near me. Why is it so many city folks look through you or over you, but never *at* you, I wonder? And all the time I was trying to put through the days there, here would be Emma Louise and the baby wanting and needing me, and Auntie Dresser, and old Mrs. True-marsh, and poor Waltham's little girls—it's perfectly wonderful the way they get on with the housework since their mother died!—and oh, a dozen others. And when I thought of them, my heart would eat itself out with loneliness!"

The colonel cleared his throat preparatory to speech, but she went on, in a kind of passionate, half-sobbing, half-laughing rush that reminded him of her girlhood's impetuosity:

"Besides, I'm scared to death of taxis, and afraid of hotel clerks—I *always* feel a lump in my throat when I have to ask one of them for a key. I can't stand to be shot up to bed every night in an elevator, and to have to ring for a drink before I go to sleep; I want to go out and pump it for my-

self. And then to have a darky falling on me at every turn with a whisk broom makes me perfectly furious. I've pride enough to keep myself reasonably clean, I *hope*. I don't believe a plain countrywoman like me *ever* found contentment in that sort of life!" she exclaimed bluntly.

"The presumption is against it, I am afraid," he admitted.

"And all the evidence. You can't deny it."

"All of the evidence I happen to know of," he considered. Again he cleared his throat, and this time he spoke with decision: "Don't you go following him off on this wild-goose chase. You stay right here and keep the home ready for him when he comes back."

"That's the worst of it—he's determined to sell the furniture and close the house. He says our things are all junk, anyhow, and that when we're ready to refurnish he'll bring me new things from the city." Her throat quivered, and a mist filled her eyes. "I don't want new things!" she cried. "My old ones suit me better."

"Confound his high-handedness!" roared the colonel. "And his ignorance!" His voice dropped suddenly, taking on a strangely gentle tone. "If he realized what he is hazarding he wouldn't hazard it. He'd hang onto it with all his might. But he doesn't know. He has lost his sense of values. He's had you and the home and happiness too long. He takes it all as a matter of course." His glance passed her, and, traveling into the white night, touched the first wooded slope that lifted at the village edge. Beyond this slope was a cemetery, where lay, as newly mourned as if she had died but yesterday, the woman he had loved. "I know," he said simply.

She nodded mutely, understandingly, and for a moment they were silent. Then he said:

"If he could be made to see!"

"His mind is settled," she murmured hopelessly.

"Well, then, give him his way, Mary. He'll come back soon enough, and he'll see new tones in the leaves of the trees,

and he'll hear new music in the songs of the birds, and find little old Elm Grove isn't the worst place in the world, after all."

"Yes, but—mean-while?"

"It hurts you like that to think of his going?" he said softly.

"I can't stand it! I just can't stand it!" she whispered poignantly.

"Then, by cracky, you don't have to stand it!" he blurted. "He'll stay right here where he belongs. You leave it to me."

Softer and lovelier grew the spring days that followed, more and more placid became the nights, and busier and busier waxed Alfred Wheaton in his preparations to leave Elm Grove.

The morning of the auction sale came at last. At the suggestion of Colonel Moxley nothing had been disarranged. The Wheaton house, from kitchen to attic, presented its usual immaculate and homelike appearance.

"Things look better, and sell better in their proper settings," the colonel had maintained. "Bunch 'em in the corner of an empty room, or throw 'em in a heap on the lawn, and what have you got? A junk dealer's unsightly pile. Take my advice, and leave everything just as it is."

It had all been left as he directed, and now, wearing a tight white rose from Mrs. Wheaton's garden in the lapel of his black broadcloth Prince Albert, which was beginning to take on a greenish shade from age, he promenaded the lawn and porches, greeting the countryside as it arrived.



"He'll stay right here where he belongs. You leave it to me."

In truth, this might have been a pleasant social gathering which he had himself planned and meant to see successfully through, so genial was his manner, so imperturbable his good nature. To those who would have criticized Wheaton's desertion of the village, he replied:

"Every man to his taste. If he wants a little life, let him take it. He'll be back in Elm Grove soon enough."

"Will he, though?" they argued shrewdly. "Won't he go the length of the tether?"

"Al is no fool," he told them cheerfully, and went on to speak to others who were arriving.

As for Alfred Wheaton, he was either all bravado, or all indifference. Mingling with the groups that overran his house and grounds, he defended himself here, explained himself there, made light of his departure, and turned



"How much am I offered for the piano? Eh, Frank?" he queried.

the conversation into other channels. His trunks were packed, ready to be carried from the house, and his gray tweeds and traveling cap made him look almost jauntily youthful.

Mrs. Wheaton did not appear. The colonel glimpsed her behind the shutters of her upstairs bedroom. Her face was colorless, and her eyes looked as if they had held tears. Her tiny grandson was in her lap, and Emma Louise hung anxiously over her shoulder.

At ten o'clock the colonel pushed his way to the front sitting room, and mounting a big, square ottoman covered with Brussels carpet, announced that the sale would begin at once.

The deep-toned old voice fell upon silence—a silence that approached the utter stillness of a house of death. Almost you might have expected some one to sob. Young Frank Kennett—the husband of Emma Louise—shifted his position in a kind of nervous embarrassment, several aged ladies sighed heavily, and Alfred Wheaton, leaning against the newel post in the hall, expressed in his manner his impatience to have the ordeal over.

"My friends," began the colonel, adjusting his great spectacles, and looking out over the long, double rooms, "this sale is unusual, in that the goods offered are exactly as well known to you as to me. Through many years you have come here as friends and neighbors. Beds, tables, chairs are as familiar to you as the faces of their owners. Some of you will even recall when the initial furnishings were first placed in the small house from which this larger house sprang. You know how they have been treasured since, the constant care that has been given them. I do not need to tell you that you will find few scratches, or tears, or breaks. I do not need to remind you of their sweet and perfect cleanliness. Simple, old-fashioned, and unostentatious they are, like the home in which they have borne their inanimate part, but, like it, stanch and honest and dependable."

He ceased for the instant, consulting a memorandum.

"This table before me is the first thing on the list," he continued. "It hasn't much style. You could buy

grander ones right here in Elm Grove. They offer 'em in the windows every day. But this one is a part of the village itself, for it was made out of a cherry tree that grew not two hundred feet from where I now stand. Some of you remember the tree, and many of you remember the old gentleman for whom the table was made. I'm speaking of Grandfather Wheaton, Mr. Alfred Wheaton's father. Old Mrs. Truemarsh tells me she minds well the times she's seen the old gentleman sitting in his big rocking-chair beneath that very tree, his hat over his eyes, a newspaper on his knee, and maybe a robin perching on his shoulder. He was that gentle with birds, and all living things. How much am I bid for the table? Will some one start it at five dollars? Five? Do I hear the five? Who'll make it six?"

There was a movement in the crowd, and young Frank Kennett elbowed his way to the front and spoke in a whisper to the auctioneer.

"The table is withdrawn from the sale," the colonel announced. He lifted a tall brass candlestick and held it aloft. "Here is something for relic hunters," he said. "A brass candlestick, supposed to have been taken from an old monastery in Spain. A wedding present to the Wheatons from a sea captain, I remember. Whoever buys it can use his imagination and see an altar and kneeling priests and a big, dim interior, but"—gravely, gently—"if it belonged to me I would see a sick room, and a man lying as still as death in the middle of his bed, and a woman watching beside him. I'd see her white face shining out of the shadows, with hope refusing to die in the eyes that had grown dim from weary vigils. I'd see her there night after night, and cold, gray morning after cold, gray morning, for we didn't have trained nurses in those days, and our women fought alone, with a neighbor at their elbow, and an old-fashioned doctor to direct the fight." He turned suddenly toward an old man in the corner of the room. "Doc Lambert," he exclaimed, "the candle would show you the same picture, I reckon, since you

were there at Mary Wheaton's side. And where's Auntie Dresser? *She* was the neighbor! What am I bid for this candlestick? As a relic it's worth a tidy sum. Speak up!"

"The candlestick is mine," Alfred Wheaton said quietly, advancing and thrusting a bill into the colonel's hand.

The proceeding was irregular, to be sure, but the colonel merely readjusted his glasses, and, stepping down from the ottoman, crossed to the piano in the corner of the room.

"The piano comes next. You know without looking at it that it is an old-fashioned square Chickering, with keys that have turned yellow from age. A musician would say that its tone is cracked and tinny, and maybe it is. But it doesn't sound that way to me, and I'll wager it doesn't to you, friends. You've come past here in the twilight, some of you, as far back as thirty years ago, and you've seen a slim young girl sitting here playing happily, with a kind of swift, rushing touch that made you think of the falling of spring rain. Then, after a while, you passed and saw her again, with a baby toddling around the piano stool, and now the music wasn't quite so swift and light as it had been, but sweeter and deeper, and the girl herself was changed; she had become a woman. And so it went, year after year. Then there came a time when the piano was silent, and you missed the baby, and as you went home in the evening you saw *her* drooping in the dusk. But after a while the house took on new life again, and another little toddler had come, and one night, to your great delight, the familiar sound of the piano greeted you as you turned the corner, and there *she* was, slimmer and paler, but with something good to see come back to her face, playing 'The Maiden's Prayer,' and *him* with his arm over her shoulder as she played. And you went on, thankful that if your own heart was cold and empty, there *were* warm, happy hearts in the world, and homes where there was still music." The vibrant old voice halted, the lean old face quivered with sincere emotion. "How much am I offered for the

piano? Eh, Frank?" he queried, stooping to young Kennett, who, visibly affected, approached at the moment.

"The piano is also withdrawn from the sale," he announced dryly, and crossed to a big rocking-chair, that loomed massive and ugly in the light from one of the long windows.

"This chair is next," he said. "You see what it is—a standard rocker in olive-green plush, without a break in its covering or a sag in its springs. A stout old fellow it is to have come through all it has!" His eyes twinkled reminiscently behind their spectacles. "Many's the time I've seen it doing duty as a locomotive, a grubby engineer poking his curly head from beneath one of its arms to view the right of way, a brave fireman stoking fiercely, the seat full of wriggling children, wrapped in make-believe. Then I've seen it masquerading as a ferryboat, doing rescue work, sturdy oarsmen striking out manfully, with canes purloined from the hatrack, and a load of solemn passengers huddling in its depths. Aye, a gallant old masquerader it's been! What am I offered for it?"

"Stop! I must speak with you."

The crowd turned with a start at the sound of the imperative voice, and saw Alfred Wheaton with hand lifted to stay the proceedings. He beckoned, and the colonel moved swiftly into the hall, where the two spoke together for an instant; then Wheaton went up the stairs to his wife, and the colonel returned to mount the ottoman.

"The sale is discontinued," he informed them, in a lifted voice that carried to the stragglers on the porch. "Alfred Wheaton has changed his mind. He regrets any disappointment you may feel at going away empty-handed, but he bids me say to you that there is nothing for sale in the house."

With a gesture almost churchly in its impressiveness, he dismissed them, following them to the porch, where he stood at the rail, watching them depart. They went quickly, some instinct forbidding them to linger. A few laughed and jested at Wheaton's expense, but more went silently, or discussed the

situation with genuine feeling. When the last of them had disappeared the colonel turned back to the house for his hat, and in the cool dimness of the hall ran into Alfred Wheaton.

"It couldn't have been worse if I had been pilloried!" Wheaton groaned. The traveling cap had been thrown aside, and his tousled red-brown hair showed all its gray. His lips were not very steady, but they tried to smile his gratitude. He stretched out his hand, and the colonel gripped it.

"Forgive me, Al!" the colonel begged. "I didn't want to do it like that, before 'em all, but you didn't know what you were doing, and I had to show you. It was the only way I could find."

They were wiping their eyes guiltily, like two great boys, when Mrs. Wheaton and Emma Louise came downstairs. Emma Louise was crying, and trying to hide it by snuggling her face against the baby, which she carried on her shoulder, but her mother was dry-eyed, as brilliantly dry-eyed, the colonel thought, with a flash of memory, as she had been that long-ago night of the crisis when she had come from the sick room with: "He'll live!" on her lips. On her face was almost the same expression of relief and exaltation.

"I can't say anything," she murmured, going up to the colonel, "but you know—you know— Oh, I won't try!" She moved toward the kitchen, giving them a shining little smile over her shoulder. "Annie," she called, opening the kitchen door and letting in delectable culinary odors, "Colonel Moxley is staying to dinner."

Then she and Emma Louise busied themselves putting the few disarranged things to rights, while Wheaton flung open the traveling bag that stood by the hatrack, and brought out a box of cigars, which he extended to the colonel in a kind of shamed, half-humorous silence. A light overcoat was atop the bag, and he took it up and shook it, hanging it on the hatrack. The air of finality with which he hung it there made the colonel smile a little inwardly. Then they went out on the porch to smoke till dinner was ready.

RUNNING WITHOUT HALTERS

By HOLMAN F. DAY



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

CRINGING Scotaze had had a similar scare once before in its history.

That was when old Doc Pluff was fibbing and meddling around town.

Old Doc was a veterinary who practiced, without a license, on "critters," and occasionally took a chance of going to jail by "sneaking in a little practice on humans," as he put it. But as most "humans" did not relish a prescription that involved swilling down a pailful of old Doc's herb brew, he had few two-legged patients, and did no especial harm until he was called in on the case of Aunt Dorcas Bird, having made a trade with Uncle Bird that he would tend her for a shilling a visit—no cure, no pay. The other two doctors of the village were away on their vacations, or something of the sort, and Aunt Dorcas grew violently worse, after valiant struggles with allopathic doses of the brew. Then old Doc got scared, and sent a post card to the State board of health, resolving to go right to headquarters in that emergency.

He wrote:

Dere sur i hav a kase of Smalpocks in
Scotaze. Hussel down here. Dr. Pluff.

The high fugler of the board "husseled." He came with red flags, an immune nurse, and a trunkful of disinfectant truck; and Doc Pluff met him at the railroad station. He drew the city physician off to one side, and he said, said he:

"I'm sorry to have excited you all up, but, you see, I needed a smart doctor in a hurry, and so I took desperate steps. What she really has got, so I figger, is inflame-tory rheumatism, mixed in with the colic; but I was in a rush, and couldn't spell the cussed thing, and so I said smallpox. It's all the same thing so long as you've got here."

Well, what followed in Scotaze at that time would make quite a story, and it will be a good one to tell some day; but just now we have to do with another matter.

It was a serious matter. Scotaze was truly in for it on the epidemic question. The Snell twins came back from a visit to their cousins in West Peru, and brought over the town line a mutual case of scarlet fever and canker rash. Not to be outdone in the way of importations, Blake Wormell's

young son went to a kissing social in Smyrna, and accumulated so many diphtheria germs that he had plenty for himself and enough to pass around the village school; he kept on going to school with a camphor-soaked rag around his neck until he had spread the plague to the four corners.

The village doctors gave out cheery word that the diseases were running light, but the quarantine they imposed, cooperating with the State board of health, was not the less rigid. Red flags fluttered more thickly in Scotaze than in the yard of a railroad terminus. Even the man whose domicile was not labeled was under suspicion if there were children in his family.

Out of all this came about as curious a situation as Scotaze ever faced. Practically every storekeeper in the village had a red flag beside the front door of his residence. The home of the postmaster was under quarantine. The twins of Lycurgus Snell, the blacksmith, had started the scarlet fever—and a blacksmith shop, when the icy season is on, and horses need sharp calks, cannot well be closed.

The business men of the village met in disconsolate conference in Boadway's store. They had been informed by the doctors that if they elected to stay at home they could remain there, of course; but they would not be allowed to poke their heads out of doors while the plague was on. If they chose to keep on with their business they would not be allowed to visit their homes under any pretext.

There was only one sensible thing to do, much as it rasped the feelings. The business men of the village must become outcasts from home. The wives must be marooned with the children. That was the sense of the meeting. Business must be continued, of course. People must eat; folks must have clothes and medicines; horses must be shod; and mails must come and go.

A band of anxious, perturbed, lone-some-looking men took possession of the Scotaze tavern, and filled Landlord Franklin Fyles' hostelry to the eaves.

That first night a more lugubrious

crowd never met under one roof. There were men who had not spent a night away from home for years. The orbit of a storekeeper in a small village is a narrow one. He must be on his job six days in the week, and home on nights and Sundays. Necessity makes custom and fixes habits. After a man has done certain things regularly about so long in his life he doesn't want to do anything else. Nothing else seems right and proper and enjoyable. That night men locked their store doors after their usual habit, and trudged way home before they remembered that the door of home was closed to them. Then they dragged their way gloomily back to the tavern, and joined their brothers in exile.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul and Hiram Look dropped into the tavern that evening. It had occurred to them that it would be a populous loafing place even if it were not a popular and cheerful one.

They found a row of men sitting in the main room, their faces as long and as sagging as the jowls of hound dogs. These men were mournfully swapping experiences and relating how many years it had been since they had been away from home a night before.

"I'm the sort," stated the cap'n, after listening for a time, "that believes in matrimony and a happy home as much as anybody on earth; but I also believe that a ship which stays on one tack too long is bound to run onto the rocks. Of course, this is what you might call a forced tack, and it ain't as pleasant as though you had made plans for it. But the effect is the same. It improves marriage to have the husband and wife cast loose from each other once in a while and see other folks, and talk other talk, and fluff up their interest in things in general and in each other."

"You ain't qualified to talk to settled married men like we are," snapped the postmaster, picking Fyles' tough steak from between his teeth, and remembering that this was the evening when his wife always cooked lamb smother and onions.

"You ain't passing the twit to me

that I ain't a settled married man, be you?" demanded the cap'n.

"You've got to own up that you have devil-may-care all around the world on a ship half your life before you came here and got married. And every summer you go off alone on some kind of a junket—and we never think of deserting our families like that," said the postmaster sourly.

"And there's where you make your mistake," insisted Cap'n Sproul. "Three-quarters of the married men around here, and in the country generally, stick to home so close that they forget all about how to look after themselves, or manage themselves, or behave in general if their wives ain't right along with 'em all the whole time. Those kind of men ain't only half developed. Let something happen to boost 'em out of the rut, and they're worse than a ship without her rudder."

"For my part, I believe in staying right at home, and then you won't lose your rudder," declared Erskine Dodd, of the dry-goods store.

"But you've got to allow for accidents in this life. You can't always have everything run right along smooth and the same—three meals a day at home, put out the cat at nine p. m., and your wife always on the job. I've seen a hoss, gents," proceeded the cap'n, warming to his subject, "that was used to being let out in the yard every evening for a stroll and a bite of grass. That hoss was used to it, I say, and he was trained. He knew how to behave, and when to come back into the barn, all so nice and demure, so to speak. And I've seen other old truck hosses that have been shifted right from harness to a stall all their lives, and fed nothing but hay—I've seen 'em let loose all of a sudden. They have run and kicked and cavorted, and stamped and dodged and rolled, and whinnered and stood first on one end and then on the other, and raised particular tophet all over the neighborhood, and maybe tumbled down finally and broke their fool necks before anybody could catch 'em. I ain't passing out any slurs or insinuations—but I've kept my eye out more or

less on widderers—and I've seen some married men perform the first time they ever got away from home after being hitched up too long."

"Nothing personal meant, I presume?" inquired the postmaster.

"Nothing personal, unless it happens to hit any case here I don't know about."

"I want to observe," volunteered Blake Wormell, hardware and stoves, "that it seems to me that you are passing reflections on your neighbors; otherwise you wouldn't feel called on to make any such talk here where you see us sad and sorrowful, being kept out of our homes and away from those dear ones we love." Mr. Wormell was not a smoker, and in that fog of tobacco fumes he was homesick for the purer atmosphere of home, and was inclined to be lachrymose. "I walked clear to my gate this evening before I remembered that I am doomed to outer darkness. I miss my home more than words can say."

"I ain't saying but what you do," agreed the cap'n; "but I say it's a good idea for a man to get away for a little while, so as to find out how much he misses it, and so that he can appreciate it more. And while he's about it," he added, "he'd better ponder over whether he really misses the dear one whom he loves, or misses just the petting and pampering and waiting on and tending he gets at home. There's a lot of selfishness in this world, gents, that hollers about love and thinks mostly of vittles."

After that remark the cap'n became the focus of concentrated and unfriendly stares.

"I don't see how any man can sit here and look at us and make any such remarks," stated Odbar Boadway, general store. "You can see how we feel. Night after night we have got to sit here just like this, without a minute's peace or enjoyment. Thank Gawd, I never went to sea, if it gives a man a heart like you've got, Cap'n Sproul. That's all I can say. If I wasn't so sorrowful I'd say more."

Mr. Boadway threw away the



"Sing rangle! Sing tangle! A rip-doody dah!"

"snipe" of his cigar, and, taking a pitcher of ice water, stubbed gloomily up the stairs toward the cheerless comforts of a tavern bed. He led a general retreat of his rueful associates. All went upstairs and left Hiram and the cap'n alone. As those exiled heads of households departed, they mumbled among themselves, and glowered on the man who had dared to insinuate that there was any other place at nightfall except home for a happy husband.

"I don't know as I ever heard you talk more sassy and unreasonable to your neighbors, Aaron," confided Hiram, as the two walked to their homes under the stars. "I can sympathize

with 'em even if you can't. I can go to my own home, and you can go to yours, not having children. You ought to sort of put yourself in their place."

"For a man who has been around the world as much as you have," retorted Cap'n Sproul, "you don't seem to be able to see a point very well. I was a-warning those men against what's sure to happen."

"Well, what is sure to happen?"

"What always happens when old truck hosses find out all at once that their halters are off. I'm

in hopes that what I have said to 'em to-night will put 'em on their mettle and keep 'em straight. I'm going down there every evening and sit and look at 'em and keep 'em bragging on how they love their homes and how unhappy they are. Mebbe I can hold 'em in line if I'm pick-ed enough with my tongue. But if I'm any judge of men—and I ought to be—that crowd of old fools who ain't used to being out of leading strings will go hellbent and demoralized before they wake up and know what has happened to 'em. It's up to me to stop 'em if I can." He slammed his gate behind him, and went into the house, and left Hiram staring.

The next evening Cap'n Sproul was early on his job at the tavern as mentor of morals and custodian of characters. It was barely eight o'clock, and he was surprised to see that the lights in the village stores were out. Nine o'clock was the usual closing hour. The cap'n was a bit provoked, for he had a commission to execute for his wife at the drug store.

He found Druggist Bibb herded with the other commercial sinews of Scotzate in the tavern's main room. In reply to protests from Cap'n Sproul, Mr. Bibb explained without shame that there was nothing doing in the way of business, anyway, and that he and the rest of the traders had decided to close shop and get together and cheer each other up.

"Take men like we are, kept out of our happy homes, and we've got to do something to keep our minds off'm our sorrows," added Mr. Bibb. He volunteered the further information, in a whisper, that he had mixed up a punch that afternoon, and had punched it quite severely with New England rum. Along with the whisper, the cap'n got a flavor from Mr. Bibb's breath, and he decided, after a look into the druggist's watery eyes, that Mr. Bibb had not neglected to sample his mixture, to make sure that it was all right.

"I'm always willing to do my part in helping men keep their minds off'm their sorrows," said Mr. Bibb; "and that punch is out in the dining room, and you're welcome to a mugful any time you feel like taking a snack, cap'n. Everybody is welcome."

"I haven't got any personal sorrows to drown this evening," stated Cap'n Sproul dryly; and he sat down and looked on moodily while Mr. Bibb headed a procession to the dining room, after announcing what he had furnished in the way of solace.

"Better all come along," advised Blacksmith Snell jocosely. "We get excursion rates where there's a crowd."

Hiram Look was one of the first to return to the main room, where the cap'n held the fort in almost solitary

state. Hiram was stroking moisture from his mustache, and he sat down beside his friend and lighted a cigar.

"I wouldn't have your general disposition for a hundred dollars a minute, pay in advance," stated the old showman, *sotto voce*.

"Prob'y not," growled the cap'n in reply. "If you had a genteel disposition in you for one minute it would kill you."

He had fastened gloomy gaze on Blake Wormell, who had come back from the punch bowl puffing at a cigarette. Mr. Wormell was explaining that he had been told that tobacco smoke in a room was less offensive if a man were smoking on his own hook.

"You can see for yourself," went on the cap'n, "that this thing is coming out just as I told you it was coming out. Let men get loose in this world, and they start out hunting for excuses to be devilish. See that old fool of a Wormell, and hear him talk!"

"Smoking a cigarette never hurt a grown man," snapped his companion.

"It ain't the cigarette; it's the blamed old Adam in him starting to work. He feels his halter is off, and he's getting ready to cavort. The sight of old hosses trying to caper makes me sick."

"Say, fellers, I've just thought of a comic song I used to sing years ago before I was married," announced Odbar Broadway. He had come in at the tail of the procession, licking his lips.

"Give a canary bird some seed and a hunk of cuttlefish, and a man grog, if you want 'em to sing," muttered Cap'n Sproul.

"This is just the sort of a song for a jolly crowd, because the chorus comes every other line, and everybody can come in on the chorus."

"I ain't just sure, for one, that we ought to sing comic songs," objected Mr. Dodd, dry goods. "There's sickness at home, and we're here in this tavern, lone and all forlorn."

"That's why we ought to cheer ourselves up if we can," declared Blacksmith Snell. "The young ones are having a light run of what ails 'em, and our wives are having the comforts of

home. We are really the ones who are suffering the brunt of the trouble, and we ought to keep our spirits up. What's the chorus of that song, *Odbar?*"

"It goes: 'Sing rangle! Sing tangle! A rip—doody dah!' Tune like this." Broadway cleared his throat, sang a line, and then rehearsed his volunteer chorus until they were able to bawl it lustily and with confidence.

Broadway jumped up into a chair so that he could be seen by all while he was beating time.

"I'll start in now, and sing the words, and all of you come in on the chorus strong:

"There was a bold baker of Bantury town."

He slished his forefinger through the air as a signal, and his neighbors seemed to forget their woes as they whooped: "Sing rangle! Sing tangle! A rip—doody dah!"

"And the baker to Mansfield market was bound," piped Broadway. His chorus was right with him. The volume of sound made the windowpanes chatter. Hiram jumped up and added his voice. Cap'n Sproul scowled and listened.

There were around thirty verses in the song, and it was not a carol that was suited to polite society. But they sang it through with gusto and grins, and slapped each other enthusiastically on the back when it was ended. Then Mr. Bibb frantically waved the way to the dining room—and he had plenty of company on his trip, for everybody knows that singing is thirsty business.

When they were back in the tavern office again Druggist Bibb rapped on the cigar case, signifying that he wanted silence. He had a red spot on each cheek, and he wore an aureole of good will to all mankind.

"Dear business friends," he said, with fervor, "we are just finding out tonight something that we have been overlooking for a good many years. Here we have been stubbing to our stores, and then back home again, and missing a lot of good-fellowship. It shows how men can get into a rut and go through life without enjoying half

of what's right around them for to enjoy. Scotaze has been suffering from dry rot. I move that we here and now organize ourselves into a club of good fellows, and keep on as we have begun."

He was cheered vociferously.

"It needs trouble in this world to stir the deep feelings of men, and this idea has sprung out of the trouble which has come on our dear village. The trouble will pass, but let's keep on with the fun. We can have regular meetings, and make life merrier for ourselves. Has any gent here got an idea of a good name for the organization?"

There was silence in the room, and men wrinkled their brows, and pondered.

Blacksmith Snell felt especially amiable, and had not relished the sour look on the cap'n's face. He thought he saw a way of placating that grim guest, and suggested that they leave the choice of a name to a man who had been about the world much and probably had good ideas of right titles for a band of jolly fellows. Cap'n Sproul studied their expectant faces gloomily.

"I knew a crowd of fellows about like you once. They used to hide away from their wives and raise Cain. About the same as this. If I remember right, they called themselves the Double L and L U Club."

"What did the letters stand for?" inquired Chairman Bibb hopefully.

"Let Loose and Liquor Up Club."

"I can't see how any such name would fit us, and I don't think any slur of that kind is called for," was the smart reproof delivered by Mr. Dodd, dry goods.

"If you want to lie about yourselves, call your club the Weeping Widderers, Pro Tem," advised the cap'n, not at all abashed by the rebuke. "Seeing that I don't seem to have the qualifications that are needed in a charter member, I'll go home, so that you can go into executive session." He knocked the ashes from his pipe and walked out.

He was informed by Hiram Look the next forenoon that the new club had

remained in session until close on midnight, had chosen the name "Genial Gentlemen," had sung several more songs, had adopted a grip, and proposed to make life worth living in Scot-taze.

"So, you see, Aaron, you were all wrong in what you threw out the other day. Here we have an organization of the business men of the place—social, helpful, cheerful—and it's better than any board of trade that was ever started. That's because it gets nearer to human nature."

"And human nature is what is going to raise the devil with that proposition down to the tavern," insisted the cap'n. "Human nature in those men has been tied up to a stanchion all their lives like

a steer with a ring in his nose. I've been out and around the world, and I've seen men operate, and I tried to give 'em a warning about that feeling which comes over a man when he finds himself cut loose all of a sudden from them things which have toned him down."

"It was the sense of the meeting," stated Hiram stiffly, "that grown men don't need advice in that line. You're welcome to drop in of an evening, but we don't want any more slurs or twits."

Cap'n Aaron Sproul was not cursed with a sensitive disposition. He dropped into the tavern that night as calmly as if he were a welcome guest. He had made certain predictions, and he went as an amateur student of



"You have certainly got the hottest little town here I've struck in all my travels."

psychology in order to observe how those predictions came out.

He sat down beside the postmaster, who was lighting a fresh cigar with a rakish air.

"I see the flag has come down off your house to-day," remarked the cap'n.

"Yes, and it's pretty consoling to have everything straightened out in a man's dear and happy home, Cap'n Sproul." The postmaster stretched out his legs, and puffed contentedly.

"Home being so dear and happy, and you being kept out as long as you have, I should most think you'd be there instead of sorrowing around this tavern to-night."

"I see you are just as sarcastic as usual," snarled the postmaster. "But a man in my position owes a duty to the public, I want you to understand. There might be germs lingering in my home. I don't propose to take chances on peddling out those germs through the post-office window along with the mail. I'm willing to sacrifice my feelings, and stay here in the tavern till all is settled for sure."

The postmaster was hailed jovially at that moment by three men who were getting up a little game of "set-back," and he hurried to their table and took cards. Other games were in progress in corners of the big room, and the cap'n heard the clink of coin. Hiram Look had responded to urgent request, and was showing some eager spectators how the experts used to deal faro in the old days of the one-ring circus. He had his silk hat on the back of his head, a cigar was upcocked in his mouth, and he was so carried away by the spirit of the occasion that he finally started what he loudly proclaimed was "a square game."

A stranger guest of the tavern came out from the dining room, picking his teeth after a late supper, sat down beside Cap'n Sproul, and hitched up the legs of his plaid trousers.

"A drummer like I am, with a route in three States, hops into some pretty sporty places," he informed the cap'n, after he had looked and listened for some minutes; "but you have certainly

got the hottest little town here I've struck in all my travels. How about your gambling laws—don't you have any?"

"You'd better ask Nute, our town constable, about that," advised Cap'n Sproul. "He's that fellow over across there with that tall bunch of poker chips in front of him."

"Certainly a live little place," said the admiring stranger. "It's my idea of the right way to live—have plenty of sporting blood, and show it when you get a chance. But I'm no hand for cards. You don't seem to be, either. Probably you're like me—give me a rattling go with the mitts, or a hen-fight. And now that they've got to faking the mitt game so much, give me the henfight for the real goods. I do something in that line myself when I'm at home. I've got as good a bird as ever swallowed chopped liver."

Cap'n Sproul smoked on without comment.

The traveling salesman nipped off the end of a cigar, and spat out the fragment of tobacco.

"To ask a sassy question, you don't happen to be interested in anything in the hen line, hey, governor? I never know when I'm going to strike a good sport who is willing to back a bird, and it just occurred to me that I'd probably run across somebody in a hot little town like this."

"Our chief pirate here in town in all them kind of games is that fellow over there in the plug hat," stated the cap'n, indicating Hiram with a jab of his pipe. "He's in for most anything—even to fighting grandmothers, providing you've got one, and he can borrow one."

The man jumped up, rammed his hands down into the pockets of his plaid trousers, and strolled over to Hiram, standing at his elbow and waiting for an opportunity to speak to him.

Cap'n Sproul arose and went home. Boadway had shown symptoms of being ready to sing another song. On top of that scene of gambling and that talk of rooster fighting, a song by Boadway, the cap'n decided, would be too hearty a dose for one evening.

"They can talk about laws and penalties and parsons and preaching all they're a mind to," he mused as he climbed the hill to his house. "But you take the case of most every man in this world who jogs on all steady and straight without letting fly his heels or tipping over his apple cart, and it's because some little woman has got a snaffle bit in that man's teeth and is reining him so carefully that he doesn't just know he is being driven. The more I look at that crowd of men back there the more I like that little speech of mine about old hosses."

Hiram Look was an early caller on Cap'n Sproul next morning, and he came in dragging hard at a big cigar and looking rather fretful.

"Perhaps you and your friend there thought you could bluff me to a standstill, but I reckon you had a better notion of my sporting blood than that," he blurted.

"What friend there?" asked the cap'n.

"That dude with them checkerboard pants you was chumming with last evening, sitting there poking fun at your own friends and neighbors, and telling him that they are all a set of pikers, without the courage to back their own convictions or their own propositions. Now we propose to show you and him whether we are game or not. We have covered his five hundred dollars as a club—a patriotic and public-spirited club of this town. We'll show you what the Genial Gentlemen can do when they are called on to hold up the name of this town, so that no cheap drummer can go up and down the land pointing his finger at Scotaze. And if you've got any money that you want to make talk, out with it, and post it as a side bet, and I'll cover every dollar with one of my own. I tell you, we have organized ourselves here at just the right time. It was a lucky thought, that club was! We have now got the Genial Gentlemen to hold up the good name of this town!"

"Hold on a minute!" broke in the cap'n impatiently. "All I'm finding out is that you propose to hold up the name

of this town. I've got that part through my head. But what is all this thing about, anyway? Go ahead and hold up the name of the town till your arms get tired if you want to. But where do I fit in?"

Hiram bent on his friend a gaze wherein scorn, rebuke, and suspicion were blended.

"Now, don't try to ram your old head under a chip and leave all the rest of yourself sticking out, and think you are fooling anybody. You went to work and torched that drummer-on to make brag talk to us. Then you ran away. Do you suppose any sucker with a red necktie and song-and-dance pants on can stand up to me, that has fought hens from here to the Black Elephant in Mexico City, and give me any lip about his yellow-legged, high-station gamecock? Do you suppose a club like the Genial Gentlemen is going to hear talk like that and not act? I reckon you don't know us, Cap'n Sproul. We have covered his money; I stand ready here and now to cover any of yours that you want to lay down. We propose to hold up the name of Scotaze, and we'll have the ram-hammerdest rooster fight that was ever pulled off on the American continent—and he can bring along all his city friends he wants to, and we'll cover every cent they lay at the ringside—and they'll walk home!"

Hiram glared at his friend, who seemed to have become speechless.

"I repeat, we've got the nerve and the public spirit—the Genial Gentlemen have—to hold up the name of our town even if some other men I could name haven't."

"Where are you going to have this henfight—in the vestry of the Methodist church?" inquired the cap'n. "You might just as well hold up the name of the town in good shape whilst you're about it. You and the rest of them weeping widderers have got demoralized enough to do most anything. I've seen it coming from the start. Which minister are you going to ask to referee the fight?"

"I haven't got any time to listen to



"See that leg action!" bawled the trainer.

sneers," retorted Hiram. "Any money that you want covered you can leave at the post office."

He went away, muttering his opinion of the public spirit of a man who would league himself with a drummer against his own fellow citizens.

That was an insinuation that deprived Cap'n Sproul of speech for the time being. So the Genial Gentlemen, unable to rally him on their own side of the fence, had insisted on classing him with the other partner in this outrage upon decency, eh?

That evening he marched into the Scotaze tavern bodeful, grim, a picture of uncompromising determination. He stood in the center of the room, glaring ominously at the jovial gentlemen until they gave over their cards and their songs and stared at him in silence. He had come among them as a real skeleton at the feast.

"It has been passed out to me in a sneering way to-day," he stated, with heat, "that I am hitched up some way, somehow, with a certain fly-by-night jimdinkus who was sitting here last evening nursing a pair of creased pants.

I want to ask what is the general verdict in this gang on that subject."

His eyes challenged Hiram Look. Mr. Look was never backward in any emergency where he was called upon to speak in public.

"I will say in behalf of all present that you were seen buzzing with him in a corner. You must have ste'boyed him on to what he did. He tackled us with a line of talk that you must have put him up to. And he found that he wasn't talking to pikers—you bet your life on that! We'll be ready for him when he comes—and we're ready for you now."

There was a howl of indorsement. The cap'n plunked a hard fist into the palm of the other hand.

"I never saw that man before; I don't know his name; I don't want to know his name; I never had any dealings with him except to suggest that he was with birds of a feather and better flock with 'em, and I'm down here now to have all talk that has been made about me taken back."

"It's too bad the gent ain't here to speak for himself," said Druggist Bibb.

"It's easy enough to make talk behind a man's back. But he has gone to get his hen and collect admiring friends. I reckon the thing will have to stand in statue ko, as the lawyers say, till he can get back here and speak for himself. But you might as well understand, Cap'n Sproul, seeing and hearing is believing, so far as we're concerned."

That sentiment was also indorsed in no uncertain tones by the rest of the Genial Gentlemen.

"You have been offish ever since we started this organization for the benefit of this village," declared Boadway. "You haven't had a kind look or a decent word. If you ain't on one side, standing with your fellow citizens who are trying to make life better and keep up the name of this town, then you must be on the other side."

"So you're bound to drag me into this thing by hook or crook, are you?" demanded the cap'n, in tone of menace.

"Why, you are already in it," bleated Dodd, dry goods, who was smoking a cigar in the most devil-may-care style. "If you wasn't in it you wouldn't be down here making so much talk."

"All I have done has been to warn you old fools that you'd go cavorting into trouble as soon as your halters were off," cried the incensed cap'n. "Was I a prophet or wasn't I? You have whooshed down the slide to tophet so far in a few days that now you're proposing to hold up the name of this town by running a rooster fight. And you're the business men of this place—with wives at home nussing and tending sick children!"

"Perhaps your way of showing your sporting blood when a man comes along and makes loud talk to you would be to get up a knitting contest between the old maids of this place, but that ain't the style of us red-blooded men here," declared Hiram.

"And you run and tell that much to your friend with the checkered pants," advised Druggist Bibb.

The Genial Gentleman emitted another of those hateful howls of indorsement.

"And you can tell him something else," shouted Hiram, stirred to boasts. "I've fit hens before in my life, and I know how to pick winners and where to send for the A-one goods. Speakin' as a friend who wishes you well, Aaron, you'd better drop that chum of yours and come in with us, and help hold up the name of the town, because we have telegraphed on one hundred dollars to pay for a chicken that can lick the wishbone out of any rooster that ever ruffled a feather. That's the kind of sports the Genial Gentlemen of Scotaze are!"

"Three cheers for the chicken that will make them dudes from the city pawn their checkered clothes and walk home in overalls," proposed Boadway. "They'll never forget old Scotaze and her sporting blood."

Cap'n Sproul walked out while the cheers were being given. It was borne in upon him that "the old hosses" of his town had forgotten that they ever wore halters.

"He's dretful mad; you can see it in his face," faltered Mr. Dodd, a man of uncertain courage, and subject to moments of wondering what Mrs. Dodd would say. "What if he should go and report around to our wives about this?"

"I never saw Aaron Sproul get mad enough to do anything sneaky like that," stated Hiram.

"Furthermore, them wives of ours can't break quarantine. If they did, I'd begin to arrest, and I'd start in with my own wife first," said Constable Nute, patting his nickel shield.

When the cap'n trudged down to the village the next evening he was somewhat astonished after he had looked in the direction of the tavern. There was not a glimmer of light anywhere about it. No beams of radiance sifted past the curtains of the main room as usual.

He had decided that day to let the Genial Gentlemen pursue their own way to destruction, and that, too, notwithstanding the manner in which they had dragged him into their plans by insisting on classing him with the challenger in the affair of the hens. If

the tavern had worn its usual appearance he would have kept on about his business, which was to visit the post office to drop some business letters through the outside door. The gloom that clung about the tavern's exterior interested him. He went across and tried the big door. It was locked. He thumped, and after a time the door was opened gingerly a foot or so.

There was plenty of radiance within, and it shone on the cap'n's face. In the quick glance he gave indoors he saw that the windows had been hung with blankets. He saw another spectacle. Hiram was in his shirt sleeves, and was busy tossing a game rooster upon a square of burlap that men held as firemen hold a life net.

"See that leg action!" bawled the trainer. "I tell you, gents, when I order a fighting hen I know what I'm getting. Look at the way he handles himself when he jumps. Toss him! There! See the way he lights."

"I don't know about letting you come in here this evening," said Druggist Bibb, the door tender. "We've just got our hen by express, and we're having a little private training. The fight comes off Saturday evening, and, seeing that you're mixed up with the other side, it ain't just professional for you to come in here."

"Will you kindly step back in there and ask your gang of Jolly Rovers if that's the general sentiment of the bunch—that I'm playing opposition?"

Mr. Bibb closed the door. In a few moments he opened it, and reported that he had previously stated the general sentiment.

"In fact, we had talked it all over before you came, cap'n."

"Will you step back once more and ask another question? Tell 'em I've found that henfighting is pretty popular, and that I've got a little sporting blood of my own. Ask 'em if they'll let me bring a hen of my picking Saturday night so that I can tackle the winner?"

The process of training was suspended, and the Genial Gentlemen gazed at

each other with astonishment when Mr. Bibb reported.

"I've always said Aaron had sporting blood, get it stirred up," volunteered Hiram. "He has got his own notions, and sometimes they are peculiar, but he'll usually come to the scratch when you give him his own way. This ain't exactly regular, but—" He hesitated and scratched his nose.

"I've been worrying about our wives," put in Dodd, dry goods. "If we let him come here himself with a hen we've got his mouth closed. But if we make him any madder by closing him out we don't know what he may do."

A few moments later Druggist Bibb opened the door and announced that the challenge had been accepted, and that the Genial Gentlemen sent their very best regards besides.

"Thank 'em one and all," replied the cap'n. "Tell 'em I want to get into this thing, but, of course, I wouldn't come in unless I could come right and according to the rules. Good night."

If anybody outside the close circle of the Genial Gentlemen noted the arrival of certain other gentlemen on the Saturday-afternoon train, nobody made remarks. The man in the checkerboard trousers led the coterie to the tavern, snuggling a box under his arm.

The place was dark at nine o'clock, and within the main room the party impatiently awaited the arrival of Cap'n Sproul with his entry. The gentlemen from the city—apparently feeling great confidence, as city men usually do when rural rivals are concerned—had indorsed the proposition as to Cap'n Sproul with the hearty sentiment: "The more the merrier!"

At last, far away, those within the tavern heard a plaintive squawking. It came nearer. When the door was opened in answer to a loud knocking, they looked on Cap'n Sproul. He had not brought his champion in style. He had the legs of a writhing rooster clutched in his hands, and the fowl hung head downward. It seemed to be a very ordinary rooster. The first amazed glance of the experienced gen-

lemen from the city showed them that the bird was a much tousled and rather venerable Brahma.

The cap'n pushed back Druggist Bibb with a violent shove, and stood in the doorway.

"Are you all here?" inquired Cap'n Sproul.

They assured him that they were, and urged him to hurry in.

"Are the friends of both parties here as backers?"

Further and emphatic assurance of that, and renewed appeals to come in and shut the door.

"Friends and backers help make a fight fair, gents. I'm glad you have got yours. I've brought a few of my own."

He held the door wide, slatting his squawking rooster in the face of Guardian Bibb, and his party entered from the darkness without.

The two pastors of the village churches led. The wives of the business men of Scotaze followed. The rival game fowls stretched their necks between the slats of their boxes, and crowded hearty welcome to these new arrivals.

"You've played a dirty, low-down trick on the leading men of this place!" yelled Hiram, rushing forward.

"I've got a perfick right to pick my own friends and backers, and I'll match 'em with yours for decency and respectability," declared Cap'n Sproul. "And talk about your loyalty to old Scotaze—I'm the only one that's come here to fight and brought home talent!" And he tossed the old Brahma into the center of the room.

"I'll have to arrest these women for

breaking quarantine," faltered Constable Nute.

"Hold on just one second!" interposed the cap'n. "You have been so busy, you Genial Gents, forgetting your sorrows here in this tavern that you have forgotten your homes and your wives. I've been and poked up the doctors a mite—needing some friends and backers with me this evening—and quarantine has been raised all over the village. Now, marms," he added, "you'd better range into that assortment of Genial Gents and pick out what belongs to you and take 'em home. It doesn't look to me like they had any appetite for roosters, except as a Sunday dinner to-morrow. Although, if you still insist on fighting 'em, me and the reverends here will agree to referee," he informed Hiram, who was beating his fists together frantically.

"We might suggest a full attendance at church to-morrow," said one of the parsons meekly, and yet with deep meaning. "We will make it a thanksgiving service to acknowledge with praise the passing of the dark cloud of disease and—and—well, I think the brothers here will not be hurt by listening to a few plain truths about the way of the transgressor. I trust that the sisters will secure a full attendance."

The wives of Scotaze, their lips set, their faces full of righteous indignation, nodded assent, and marched away their husbands.

"As I have said before," remarked Cap'n Sproul, returning Hiram's stare of rage with interest, "whether it's hoss or man, a lot of critters ain't fit to run without halters."





MRS. WORPINGTON'S WINDFALL

by
FRANK X. FINNEGAN

Author of "To Oblige Bertha,"
"The Early Bird," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU

WHEN Mrs. Worpington stepped off the trolley car before it had come to a complete halt, and with her gaze directed to the rear upon the general neighborhood from which it had just borne her, she violated the laws of gravity, the rules of the company, and the injunctions that had frequently been laid upon her by her sixteen-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. The first violation was the most important, as it stretched Mrs. Worpington in the dust of the street for a few moments, wrenched her shoulder, and brought her the highly exciting diversion of a homeward ride in an ambulance.

But the ignominy of her tumble was so keen at the moment that she was inclined to refuse her name and address to the officious conductor, who buzzed around with notebook and pencil, obtaining the names of witnesses, after Mrs. Worpington had been hauled to safety and propped in a dusty heap against a lamp-post.

"Say, look here!" the indignant conductor warned; "either you gimme your name an' address, or I'll call a policeman an' have him ask you—an' *then* we'll see! I ain't goin' to run no chances of losin' my job when you sue the company for damages an' I don't know nothin' about your case!"

"I'm not going to sue your company," Mrs. Worpington protested.

"All I want is to get home and into bed. My shoulder hurts."

"That's what they all say—they ain't goin' to sue," said the conductor gloomily; "but I've seen too much of it in my time. Come on, missus. You'd better give us that address of yours."

The upshot of it was that Mrs. Worpington tremblingly gave him the information he sought, and as a thoughtful Samaritan from the crowd had telephoned for an ambulance, it came rolling up just then, and the patient was carefully assisted to a seat, after the surgeon had decided that she could survive the journey to her home. By that time the throng of onlookers had swelled to proportions that blocked the street and stalled a line of trolley cars in either direction. Mrs. Worpington surveyed the assemblage with no little pride through the window of the ambulance.

"I suppose most of 'em think I'm killed," she said to the surgeon complacently. "Land's sake! Won't there be a turnout when we drive into Whittaker Street!"

Mrs. Worpington's forecast of the sensation her arrival in Whittaker Street would arouse among her neighbors was not greatly overdrawn, and when the ambulance backed up before the Worpington cottage, the shrill screams of Elizabeth, standing on the

porch, with her apron thrown over her head to shut out what grisly sights might be revealed, gave the one touch needed to empty every house in the block. There was a distinct shock of disappointment among the sympathizers when Mrs. Worpington descended from the ambulance on her own sturdy limbs, instead of being carefully lifted out on a stretcher, but at least she leaned upon the arm of the surgeon as she hobbled into the house, her hat was awry, her clothes dusty and disheveled, and she bore every outward evidence of having been in an accident.

"What on earth?" demanded Mrs. Lawson, lumbering heavily from the adjoining cottage.

"Trolley car," Mrs. Worpington briefly explained; "I fell gettin' off."

Elizabeth promptly tempered her screams and gave way to indignation.

"I've told you a hundred times about gettin' off backward, ma," she exclaimed, "but you will keep on tryin' it! Are you hurt bad?"

"Land's sake, Elizabeth!" Mrs. Lawson protested. "She didn't *try* to fall down! How you talk! Why don't you come an' help her?"

She had tucked a hand under Mrs. Worpington's left arm, and, as the ambulance surgeon was on the other side, there did not seem to be much chance for Elizabeth to help, unless she took the feet. But the weeping daughter came down the steps to join the little party, and the neighbors began to drift back to their homes, as the crowd breaks up when the fire engines start back to their quarters.

"She's not hurt badly," the surgeon volunteered. "I think her shoulder is wrenches a little, but there's nothing out of place. A few days' rest ought to see her all right again."

Mrs. Lawson paused at the door. It was manifestly not wide enough to admit them three abreast, and the surgeon gave no indication of dropping back.

"You'll be all right now, Mrs. Worpington," she suggested soothingly. "Elizabeth will take care of you. An' I'll be right handy if you should need me."

"Thank you, Mrs. Lawson," the patient faltered, "but I don't think I'll need anything that Elizabeth can't do for me. I don't believe I'm hurt bad. Come in, Mrs. Lawson."

"I haven't got a minute," Mrs. Lawson declared; "my bread is in the oven." And she stepped in behind Elizabeth.



It stretched Mrs. Worpington in the dust of the street for a few moments.



"Either you gimme your name an' address, or I'll call a policeman an' have him ask you—an' then we'll see!"

With their aid, the surgeon disposed Mrs. Worpington comfortably in an easy-chair, gave a few instructions as to the care of the damaged shoulder, and briskly withdrew. The ambulance drove away, the last of the staring children scattered to play, and the excitement in Whittaker Street was over.

"However did it happen?" Mrs. Lawson cooed, when Elizabeth had hurried to fetch her mother a drink of water. "Land's sake! we ain't safe no place these days—between their aut'mobiles an' their trolleys, a person'd better stay to home."

Mrs. Worpington told her how it had happened—told her with a wealth of detail that gave the occurrence much of the importance of a railroad wreck. She repeated sections of her recital that Elizabeth had missed while she was absent for the reviving draft of water, and she embroidered and elaborated the narrative with an imagery they had had no idea she possessed. There were questions now and then, designed to shed light upon obscure points, and

Mrs. Worpington was in the midst of her third description of how she felt at sight of the ambulance backed up beside her, when there was a knock at the door.

Elizabeth hastened to open it, and found a suave, well-dressed young man standing on the porch, hat raised deferentially.

"I would like to see Mrs. Worpington, if you please," he said.

Elizabeth looked back over her shoulder to her mother, propped up in a nest of pillows in the easy-chair.

"Somebody to see you, ma," she announced. Mrs. Worpington started to rise in her excitement, but a twinge of pain through her injured shoulder sent her back among the pillows.

"Ask him to come in, Elizabeth," she said, "though goodness knows I'm not fit to see anybody just now."

The young man at the door did not wait for a definite invitation from Elizabeth. He gently pushed his way past her, bowing to Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Worpington as he placed his hat on the

center table and began drawing off his gloves. Elizabeth slowly closed the door and stood near it, staring.

"Mrs. Worpington, I trust you will excuse this intrusion," he said, "but I have been sent by the street-car company to call on you, to find out the extent of your injuries, and to assure you that the company regrets this unfortunate accident very much."

Mrs. Worpington greeted this remarkable and unexpected announcement with a pleased and gratified smile, but Mrs. Lawson rose to the occasion. With her plump arms folded where her waistline ought to be, and her chin thrust out belligerently toward the stranger, she tossed her head impatiently before she made reply.

"Well, I should think they would!" she declared. "An' it's little enough for them to do! With their cars breaking people's backs an' cutting people's legs off every day, it must keep you pretty busy apologizing."

He folded his gloves carefully and bowed an indorsement of Mrs. Lawson's sentiments.

"Quite so, madam; it is the least the company can do," he said, "and it is, in fact, the least that it attempts to do. It is part of my business here to learn what damage has been done—what real loss you may have sustained, and to see in what way the company can make it up to you," he went on, turning again to Mrs. Worpington. "I came here as soon as the report of the accident was received at the offices."

"Oh, it doesn't amount to anything, thank you," Mrs. Worpington quavered; "it's only my shoulder, and the doctor said it would be all right in a few days—"

She raised her eyes and, to her amazement, beheld Mrs. Lawson making violent signals of distress behind the visitor. Her frown was terrific in its import, she shook her head in violent negation of Mrs. Worpington's pacific attitude, and waved her hands in despair. These unexplained antics struck such immediate dismay into Mrs. Worpington's soul that her voice trailed off into silence, and the mysterious

stranger took up the burden of conversation, while Elizabeth, completely out of her depth, stared helplessly from one to the other of the group.

"Yes, I was very glad to learn from the report of our conductor that your personal injury was probably trivial," he said, "but there are damages, of course, that must be met. Your gown, for instance, was doubtless damaged, if not ruined, Mrs. Worpington. Although the ambulance surgeon has assured you that your shoulder will be all right in a week or so, you will probably call in your family physician to set your mind at rest—there will be a fee for that."

"Yes, an' there'll be no little nursin'," Mrs. Lawson interposed; "these sort o' things don't heal themselves. This poor woman is liable to be flat on her back for the next couple o' weeks."

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Worpington began to protest. "I'll be all right in a day or so." But her courteous visitor interrupted with a raised hand and another little bow toward the flushed and excited Mrs. Lawson.

"You are quite right," he observed gladly, "and the street-car company gladly takes it upon itself to meet such extraordinary expenses as may be caused by this unfortunate affair. Now, what amount, Mrs. Worpington, would you say might cover all damages?"

The object of this unprecedented solicitude shifted her troubled glance from Mrs. Lawson's face to that of the caller. The features of her rotund neighbor were now wreathed in smiles of joy, and she was nodding waves of encouragement to Mrs. Worpington, while the man from the traction company's offices sat on the edge of a red plush chair and stately waited her decision.

"Were you—were you speaking of paying me *money* for getting knocked down by the trolley?" she asked timidly.

"Certainly, madam," he said, thrusting his hand into his pocket, "and that you might not be bothered about cashing a check, which is quite a nuisance sometimes, I have brought the cash right with me to settle for everything."



"Were you—were you speaking of paying me money for getting knocked down by the trolley?"

Now, how much would you say—er—Mrs. Worpington—”

He brought to light a roll of bills as he spoke, yellow, and green, and crinkly. Mrs. Lawson's eyes followed it as he idly bestowed it in his waistcoat pocket for the moment.

“Why—I—I hardly know what to say,” Mrs. Worpington stammered. “I hadn't thought of such a thing.”

“Do you think seventy-five dollars would cover the damage to your clothing and—er—the other expenses?” the caller gently pursued.

“I should think it would come nearer a hundred,” Mrs. Lawson hastily interposed, “with the doctor an’—an’ everything.”

This time the visitor did not bow to Mrs. Lawson's superior judgment, but continued to deal with the principal in the transaction by waiting for her reply.

“Why, I can't see that I've been damaged so very much,” she finally stammered, “but, of course, I *did* get an awful bump, and my dress is a sight to behold—you can see for yourself—”

“Suppose we say seventy-five dollars,” the visitor suggested, bringing the plethoric roll of money into sight once

more; “and that will wind things up on a friendly basis. Our company doesn't want any trouble with anybody, you know. We're willing to settle for any damage we do.”

He had counted out the money under the watchful eye of Mrs. Lawson, and was extending it to Mrs. Worpington, when he paused and restored it to his pocket. Elizabeth's heart dropped abruptly from her mouth into her boots.

“Oh, by the way,” he said, taking a folded paper from an

inside pocket, “I had almost forgotten. I must ask you to sign a receipt for the money, of course. Your friend here can sign as a witness, if she will.”

He spread the document on the table and adjusted his fountain pen. The table was at Mrs. Worpington's elbow, and he indicated the line on which she was to place her signature.

“I'm sure it's very kind and thoughtful of the company,” she declared, as she affixed a trembling scrawl to the bottom of the printed slip.

“It's no more than what's due you,” Mrs. Lawson asserted, as she signed the paper, “and it'll be a mercy if you can get through on this much.”

The visitor smilingly folded up his receipt, handed the little roll of bills to Mrs. Worpington, and took up his hat.

“I am greatly obliged to you, ladies,” he said, as he backed toward the door, “and I sincerely trust, Mrs. Worpington, that your injury will prove no more severe than we anticipate. Good afternoon,” and he deftly let himself out before Elizabeth roused herself to start for the door.

“It's a windfall!” declared Mrs. Lawson with emphasis, when his steps had died away on the little walk; “it's like

gettin' money out of a mine, that's what it is."

Suddenly she sprang up and clasped both hands to her head.

"My bread!" she exclaimed. "It'll be burnt to cinders! I forgot all about it!"

And she lumbered heavily through the little cottage and out the back door toward her neglected household tasks. Mrs. Worpington sat fingering the bills in her lap unbelievingly.

"It's a windfall," she repeated softly; "she's got it just right. Now I can get them parlor curtains, Elizabeth, and—and maybe the green-velour set of furniture."

"Taxes is only a month away," Elizabeth suggested depressingly, coming around from the rear to curl up in a rocker opposite her mother. Mrs. Worpington's mouth drooped.

"That's so," she said, "but if we hadn't got this money, Elizabeth, we would 'a' had to meet 'em somehow, and I don't intend to be cheated out of that green set when it falls on me out o' the skies like this. Help me into the bedroom until I put this money away and get fixed up a little. I declare, I didn't know how near tuckered out I was."

Mrs. Lawson was by no means a silent witness of the financial transaction in the Worpington establishment, and by noon the next day Whittaker Street knew all the details, even to the denominations of the bills and their probable destiny. Elizabeth, indeed, made her first appearance with something of the manner and distinction of an heiress.

"I suppose your mother will be gettin' the house painted," Mrs. Lawson remarked in a back-yard confidence over the fence, "but I wouldn't waste money on that if I was her. It'll make more of a show inside, an' that's where you need it, Elizabeth."

"Me?" the girl repeated. "What do I need it for?"

Her neighbor leaned a mite closer to her and stretched forth a red and roughened hand to pinch her cheek.

"Don't you suppose I know what's goin' on?" she demanded. "You're get-

tin' to be a young lady, Elizabeth. If you can get your maw to have that parlor of yours fixed up a little, you might be married this time next year."

Elizabeth giggled and looked down.

"We were talking some of getting furniture," she said, "but I don't know yet what ma is goin' to do. There's a lot o' things needed, and it isn't so much money, after all."

But, in spite of her offhand manner, the seed thus planted in Elizabeth's brain germinated, and grew, and flourished amazingly as the days slipped by, and Mrs. Worpington found her an eager ally in the matter of the green-velour parlor suite, and the new curtains; the result being that these and sundry other decorative details were installed in the Worpington parlor before the week was out.

And close upon their installation followed the timid arrival of Mr. Timothy Ashbrod one evening to make solicitous inquiry as to the progress of Mrs. Worpington toward complete recovery. Timothy had achieved the "Mister" simultaneously with the appearance of a light down on his upper lip that threatened to become a mustache.

"Mother wanted me to stop in and ask how you were getting along," he explained. "She would have come herself, only her rheumatism is bad again."

"Why, I'm getting along nicely, Timmie," Mrs. Worpington assured him, "and I'm sorry your ma isn't well. Tell her I'll be over to see her soon. My shoulder is nearly all right again."

Elizabeth, noting that his eyes were taking in the new glories of the parlor, took heart of grace to direct his attention to them with a certain definiteness.

"You haven't been to see us in a long time," she observed. "Why, I don't know when it was you were here last."

Mr. Ashbrod colored, and stirred uncomfortably in his chair. He felt somehow that he was seriously in error in not having crossed Whittaker Street more frequently to visit the Worpingtons. Also, it dawned upon him suddenly that Elizabeth had shot up past the pigtail stage of her development, and was a good-looking young woman.

"You're fixed up pretty fine here," he remarked, with another comprehensive glance around the room. "Been getting a new outfit, haven't you?"

Mrs. Worpington beamed upon him pridefully, and Elizabeth smiled in a way Mr. Ashbrod was certain she had never before smiled at him.

"Oh, we try to keep up with the times, Timmie," Mrs. Worpington said, "and what little we have, we must have good."

"That's right," he declared. "I'm strong for that, too. If you're going to do it, daddo do it right!"

That first visit of young Mr. Ashbrod was brief, but his surroundings in the Worpington parlor were so eye-filling and satisfactory, his welcome was so warm, and the invitations to repeat his call were so manifestly sincere and urgent, that he found himself lolling in the new green rocking-chair three nights later. And the inspiration of this unprecedented situation was such that, instead of awing him into an awkward silence, as he had anticipated it would do, he sat opposite Elizabeth for two hours and bartered an amazing quantity of fluent chatter, even during that period of the evening when Mrs. Worpington found it necessary to run next door to borrow a cup of flour.

When he had gone, Elizabeth sought her mother, retired for the night some time since.

"Say, ma, you've got some of that street-car money left, haven't you?" she inquired.

"I have a little," Mrs. Worpington responded cautiously. "What is it now?"

"I was just wondering," her daughter said innocently, "if we hadn't better get a new parlor lamp. This old one we've got is so worn out you can't do a thing with it. If it starts to smoke or anything, and you try to turn it down a little, it goes out."

"Uh-huh," Mrs. Worpington murmured sleepily; "I'll see to-morrow."

And thus, as time went on, and the visits of young Mr. Ashbrod came to be an accepted part of the routine of the household, Mrs. Worpington's windfall was gradually diverted into those chan-

nels in which it would do the most good from a certain feminine point of view. Mrs. Lawson, watching the hothouse speed with which the romance was budding, had no hesitation in arrogating its credit to herself.

"You know, it was me put the idea in Elizabeth's head," she was wont to tell Mrs. Worpington, on occasion when the matter of prime importance was under discussion. "That very first day after you got the money, I told her if you would get the house fixed up a little, she needn't hang behind none o' them in gettin' a husband. Plain talk is the best, Mrs. Worpington, I've always found."

But Mrs. Worpington invariably winced under this direct accusation of the spreading of snares in green velour and imitation mahogany, and declared with some asperity that the decorative changes had long been planned, and would have been carried out the following spring, even if she had not stepped off the trolley car backward that fatal day.

Came the time, after three months of ardent wooing, according to the Ashbrod lights, when Elizabeth brought her mother the looked-for tidings that Timothy had yielded to the spell of the new furniture, supplemented by what spells she had woven about him, and had besought her to join in a world of green velour and Arabian curtains of their own; to which pleading she had promptly yielded.

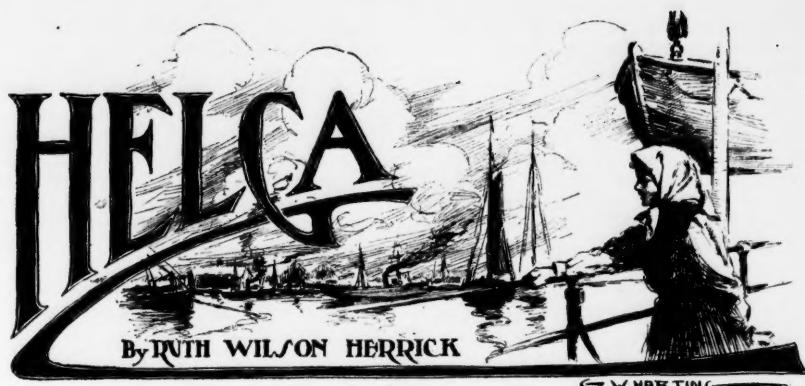
"He told me things were so different here from over at their place, ma," she shyly confessed, "it made him feel like he wanted a regular home."

And Mrs. Worpington, retailing the news to her neighbors, sniveled a little over her teacup.

"It seems sort of too bad," she said, "just when I got the house all fixed up nice the way I wanted it, I'm goin' to lose my little girl."

Mrs. Lawson shook her massive shoulders impatiently.

"Don't be foolish," she observed; "that's no way to look at it. Tim Ashbrod is a steady young fellow—it's worth every dollar it cost you!"



ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

UP to the time she was eighteen, Helga Petersen had known nothing but the little Norwegian farm where she was born, the cleared space of cultivated land, with the few turf-covered houses upon it, hemmed in by towering mountains and the black forest. Then she went to live with her married sister in a very small, quiet fishing town on the sea, and because of the great change from the solitude of the country to the manifold activities on the wharves, Helga felt that she now for the first time saw and understood life.

When she was twenty, without any agitation of mind, and principally because he asked her to, she married Lars Knudson, a sea captain, a man at least twice as old as she; and accepted with perfect equanimity the verdict that Porto Rico was to be her new home. It was the rule that no female relative could sail with the captain on his ship, so Captain Knudson arranged passage for his new wife on a sister ship, under the care of its captain, whom she had never seen until the day she sailed.

Yet Helga felt no fear and no uneasiness for the future. Neither was she greatly distressed over leaving her native country. With as little realization as a child of the enormity of this change in her life, she stood on the deck and watched the waving group on the quay

as the ship glided out through the stillness of the landlocked harbor; lifted her eyes to the black woods and the reddish-brown meadows, with the familiar mountains, lofty and snow-capped, rising above; swept a last glance along the curving street that followed the bay with its red and white houses and neat gardens, with the peasants' boats made fast at the wharves; and, waving a last farewell to her sister, who stood talking to the white-haired priest while the baby clung to her skirts, went forward to the prow, even before Norway had grown indistinct, and looked with dry, even shining, eyes out toward the open sea.

The voyage seemed interminable, and she was violently ill, for she had never been on the ocean before. But one morning, when she came out on the deck, the captain pointed to land lying ahead, and Helga saw, as it were, a new heaven and a new earth, the little spot in the tropical seas called Porto Rico, which was to be her new home.

It was almost incredible that the land she now saw could be so utterly different from that she had last seen. Yet it was a pretty bay into which they sailed, formed by an arc of islands and reefs which extended far out from the mainland. A long line of low hills rose against a sky bluer than any that Helga had ever seen. To the eastward the



The natives grew to know her, and to speak of her as she passed on the street.

land was a swamp of dense foliage, and to the westward the shore line took on a graceful curve and was edged with palmettos and coconut trees. Weakened by her long, rough voyage, Helga stared open-mouthed at the strangeness all about her, at the harbor alive with all manner of strange craft—naphtha launches, slender sailboats, and canoes—manned by dark-skinned natives in white clothes. The confusion of the many, new, odd sights on the wharf overwhelmed her.

And when she was safely established

in her new hotel, a large, pale-blue building with white trimmings, and when her new friend, Captain Vold, had sailed away, and she was left all alone on the island to await her husband's ship, a desolation such as she had never known settled upon her. It was only the beginning of a long, lonely year filled with absurd mistakes and failures to comprehend the new life; for there was not a soul on the island who could speak her language, and the fluent Spanish, as well as the English heard occasionally at the hotel, was at the end of twelve months as utterly unintelligible to Helga as on the day when she set foot on Porto Rican soil.

Moreover, Captain Knudson was gone for five days out of each week, and, with nothing to do but wander about through the narrow streets of the long, straggling town, or mend her clothes—in which, before long, she grew to welcome a tear as something to occupy her time—she gradually acquired a strangely torpid state of mind and existence. The natives grew to know her, and to speak of her as she passed on the street, the dumb stranger from the far northland, of a type so different from their own.

She looked like the ordinary Norwegian servant girl seen in the United States, strong and stocky, not at all neat in her personal appearance, her skin rough, and her hair oily and pulled

back crudely over a roll that always showed. Her blue eyes looked out upon the world with the utter simpleness of a baby's, and her mouth always stood fixedly ajar in a sort of general wonder at everything about her. She was like an undeveloped, bewildered child suddenly thrust among conditions with which she was quite unable to cope.

Captain Knudson was very good to her. He was a big man, with a plump, red face, sun-bleached hair, and a stiff, sandy mustache; and he smiled tolerantly at her constant monologue during his two days on shore a week, treating her like the helpless child she appeared to him, and soothing her loneliness instead of helping her to meet it and conquer it as he should have done. In his way, however, he was almost as unadaptable as she, but a bit of swagger and a sort of masculine bluff helped him out whenever he found himself on thin ice, and Helga's nature, being too entirely guileless to appear anything but what it was, appealed to him because it placed him in a sort of perpetual superiority over her.

All things considered, Helga Knudson was not sorry when business changed their residence to New Orleans, and she left Porto Rico at the end of a year, with as little actual concern as she had left Norway, and with little more familiarity with life. They were again unfortunate, however, in their choice of a home, for upon the recommendation of a friend, Captain Knudson established Helga in the old French Quarter, in a rather cheap boarding house on Chartres Street.

It was all very picturesque. Walking down the narrow street, one pushed open an old, battered door, walked down through a dark, damp, cement corridor, and came forth suddenly into a restful, if dilapidated, old-time courtyard. Several scraggly palms waved at the rotting galleries that lined the four walls, and an ancient, rusty fountain still jetted forth a feeble stream of water into a stone basin. Here Helga sat by the hour in the chair that she drew out from her small room onto the gallery, with no greater interest than to

watch the fountain sputter, or to listen to the queer sounds the negro servants made jabbering angry French to each other down in the kitchen.

The captain was now gone for two or three weeks at a time, and Helga seldom ventured forth into the bewilderment of the streets without him. At the table, where there were, perhaps, ten or fifteen boarders, French was spoken almost exclusively. They did attempt to teach her a few words of English, but her guttural attempts were so ludicrous that the lesson usually ended in a general laugh, in which Helga joined as noisily as the rest. In fact, it seemed so ludicrously funny to her that often she would lose all control of herself in a fit of laughter, and, with tears rolling down her cheeks and her napkin crumpled up to her mouth, would rock back and forth in a perfect paroxysm of shrieks and bursts of sound which often made the more refined American or French women at the table grow quite red with mortification for her, though she herself felt not the slightest degree of it.

But at the end of five months, Helga received the order to move herself and her chattels once more, and set forth again, this time for Brooklyn, where Captain Knudson had secured some sort of work under the harbor master that would permit him to remain at home more of the time. Helga accepted the change stolidly, bade farewell to her French friends in English phrases that left them quite convulsed with laughter in the old courtyard, and partook of her first experience with a railroad on a crowded tourist sleeper en route for Brooklyn, in the hot month of August.

This time the Knudsons found themselves among their own countrymen in a little Norwegian section of the great city, and for the first time since her marriage and her farewell to Captain Vold, Helga actually conversed with some one besides her own husband. Every one was very good to her, and it was well that she found herself among her own people, for in just a month her baby was born. He had blue eyes and very light hair, like the babies of



"Helga," he said abruptly, "did you ever think that this child might not hear?"

the north, and they called him Eric, after Helga's father, of whose death on the little farm back in Norway they had just been told in a recent letter from home.

To Helga it seemed as if life had suddenly become one vast heaven of contentment. She was among people of her own kind; she was once more in a land where the air was cool enough to breathe; she could keep house for the first time, now that her husband was so much at home; and her baby filled up all the vacant moments of her time, which had hitherto been so dull and empty. As for bothering herself greatly to make further progress with that troublesome English, what need was there? They all spoke Norwegian among themselves, and she could manage very well without it. And so her life became a round of petty, but quite satisfying, details, and she was again encompassed by a small, narrowing circle, with no yearning whatsoever to obtain a larger knowledge of the world outside.

Eric grew into a happy, mischievous baby, but silent and at times unresponsive—a little backward, they called him. He also had an independent way of displaying absolute unconcern when spoken to, a trait that irritated his father immeasurably, and even worried Helga at times. Moreover, he stubbornly refused to talk, when other babies usually begin, and had a peculiar way of fixing his eyes absently upon his parents when they argued with him temptingly upon the subject.

Then the captain began to make experiments, and would hold the child, who at this time was about two years old, upon his knees, and shout violently at him without causing the slightest quiver on the baby face.

"Helga," he said abruptly one day in Norwegian, "did you ever think that this child might not hear?"

"Not hear!" Helga dropped with a crash the plate she was wiping, and her hands flew up to her face in a peculiar gesture she had when startled; but even while she and her husband looked into one another's eyes, they were both thinking of the same trivial fact—that Eric had not even turned his head when the plate cracked into pieces on the bare floor.

They took him to a doctor, who spent much time on the case before giving his verdict; and, after it was finally pronounced, Helga grew ill from the shock.

It was days before she could realize that her blue-eyed, smiling baby was, as the doctor had said, a deaf mute; that he could neither hear nor speak, and would always be deaf and dumb. And though the doctors assured her that it had nothing whatsoever to do with

Eric's affliction, Helga was immovably convinced that the child's trouble was the direct and natural result of the long weeks and months of silence she had endured before his birth.

As she lay with aching head, it seemed as if for the first time her whole nature was aroused and stirred, and as if she began to experience all the emotions that she had been too unawakened to undergo in their proper sequence. She now endured a pang of violent homesickness as she recalled herself

sobbed and sobbed until she fell into a deep, exhausted sleep.

When she was finally up again and about, every one noticed that she was changed, that she no longer was the simple, guileless child she had been, but that she had been matured suddenly by her suffering, and at the same time utterly crushed by it. The shock had awakened her, but its pain had left her strangely powerless and inert.

So time dragged on, and the boy played about with the other children



She poured out a flood of rapid, guttural Norwegian questions.

standing again upon the deck of the ship that was putting out from the rugged coast of Norway, and a vast and cruel yearning to see her sister again, and the old priest. Then came a sickening hatred for the sultriness and heat of Porto Rico, and for the emptiness of her life there. Then a burning sense of shame as she recalled her violent fits of laughter in the little New Orleans courtyard, and the expression upon the faces of her fellow boarders, whose pity she had never comprehended until this moment. And then, at last, the peace of the months after Eric was born descended upon her again, and she

quite as if there were nothing wrong with him. It was remarkable how adept he was at making himself understood, and at catching the drift of all that went on about him. When he was five he went to kindergarten with the rest, just as one of them, and, indeed, it was only after several weeks that the teacher discovered for the first time his affliction. It set her thinking, for to her Eric had seemed an unusually tractable and apt child; he had so cleverly received the cue from his playmates for each new game and play proposed, that he had never seemed in any way different from the other children.

There happened to be on the other side of the city a home and school for deaf children, of which she was an enthusiastic advocate. The children were accepted at any age, and taught by what was known as "the oral method" to speak and to read the lips. The parents paid the child's board, visited him whenever they wished, took him home, perhaps, for short vacations, but agreed to let him live at the home until he was trained and fitted for some trade. Would Eric's parents make the sacrifice required? Would they allow the child to be separated from them during his entire boyhood?

She went to see them about it. Captain Knudson understood only partially the science of all that the lady so carefully explained to him, but he interpreted it for Helga grandiloquently as a wonderful godsend that should make Eric to understand and to speak like other children—and that was enough for Helga! She gave her consent, with the tears raining down her face, and packed all his little clothes into the same shiny, black bag in which she had laid her wedding garments when she sailed from Norway.

She could not bear to go with him while they took him away, but stayed behind in the emptiness of the silent house, until his father returned, with a brave attempt at unconcern, and told her how happy all the children in the home were, and how contented Eric was going to be.

The reports from the school were most encouraging. It was less than a month before the kindergarten teacher told Captain Knudson that his son had actually formed several words, and had begun to read lips with a remarkable aptness. The captain translated this for Helga with a considerable degree of enlargement, and Helga was wild with joy. She wanted to go over at once and see him—hitherto she had not been able to endure the thought of going to that place where he was so happy and contented without her.

As it happened, the kindergarten teacher was going over again that same afternoon, and volunteered to take

Helga along. She tried to converse with her, but without much success, for Helga's English was still largely a matter of puzzling conjecture on the part of an auditor.

But Helga was charmed with the home. All the children were out in the yard, rolling hoops, teeter-tottering on a long plank, throwing balls. Helga sat on a chair, fascinated by it all.

At last they sent out Eric, who had been put into a clean suit in honor of his mother's visit. He flew across the yard to her, and she caught him in her arms, with her face buried in his soft, yellow hair. Then, when she had been forced, by his squirming, to let him go, she set him in front of her excitedly, and poured out a flood of rapid, guttural Norwegian questions, exaggerating carefully the motion of her lips, and watching his blue eyes with frantic eagerness to see if he understood.

Both of Eric's teachers, his new one and his old one, grasped the import of Helga's actions, and interrupted her quickly.

"It will be slow," they told her, in the simplest, plainest English they could muster. "It will take more time."

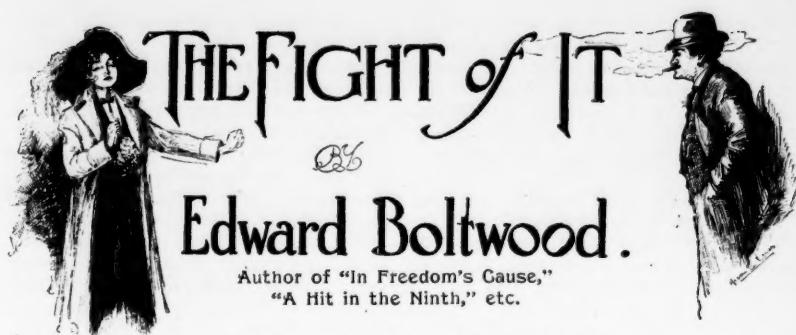
And then they told her something she had not known before.

"He will not speak your language at all. He will speak English, English. Not Norwegian, no. English, English. You must learn, too. Yes, you must learn like Eric. Learn to talk English, English, like Eric, just like Eric."

When she finally realized all they meant, she sat for a long time, half stupefied. She had thought that Eric would understand her at once, that he could converse with her fluently in Norwegian, as his father did, and she had longed to hear his childish voice prattling in the mother tongue.

She sat for a long, long time without moving, her awkward figure tense with thought. Then she rose very slowly, and her eyes looked far ahead into space, into the future. Presently she spoke, slowly and painstakingly:

"I learn too, yust like Eric. I bane going learn dis Inglish, Inglish, yas."



THE FIGHT of IT Edward Boltwood.

Author of "In Freedom's Cause,"
"A Hit in the Ninth," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. VON S. LUCAS

CLYTIE TEMPERTON declined the rouge with a murmur of dis-
taste, and Mrs. Hoffman tossed the gold box on the dressing table of her bedroom.

"Forgive me, Clytie!" she said to her cousin.

"Oh, I know I need it!" acknowledged Miss Temperton cheerfully. "A lengthy session in a Denver hospital doesn't work up color. But a rouge pot—ah!" She shuddered briefly. "It reminds me so of what I've learned to dread."

"And of what we all want you to dread, dear," sympathized Mrs. Hoffman.

She beamed a glance of approval upon the slender, handsome girl. Clytie was leaning back in a chair covered with red brocade, against which her black gown and white skin made effective contrasts. Through a broad window behind her loomed the massive profile of the Catskills, in a morning mist of rain.

"Well, you opened your eyes to the folly of it at last," Mrs. Hoffman resumed tentatively.

"I had not that much sense," laughed Clytie. "My eyes were opened merely because they came so near to closing forever. There, there—don't worry! Another month here with you at Windywood will quite set me up. And then we're off together, dear, aren't we? Rome, and Sicily, and Tunis for a whole winter!"

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"Why, yes, unless—unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless some one else that we know makes other plans for you."

Miss Temperton straightened herself.

"Some man," added the mistress of Windywood, under her breath.

"Oh!" said Clytie, rising and walking to the window, so that her face was invisible.

Mrs. Hoffman smiled hopefully, but the poise of Clytie's shoulders caused her to change the subject.

"You've never told me, Clytie, how you happened to stick to the stage for so long. Four years! It must have been a fearful grind!"

"It was, I suppose," replied Miss Temperton thoughtfully.

"Then what kept you at it?"

Clytie drummed her fingers on the glass for a moment.

"I don't quite know," said she. "It's odd how an illness blots some things out. All that I can remember is just the grind, and the slavery, and the homelessness." The girl turned from the window and began to pace the luxurious room. "What held me to it, then?" she half soliloquized. "I wonder! Certainly not necessity, and gracious knows, not success!"

"Ambition? Or love of art?" hinted Mrs. Hoffman, with an indifferent air.

Miss Temperton made a charming and derisive little grimace.

"Art!" she jeered gayly. "Nonsense!"

Ambition? No, Gertrude, we'll have to say I was a plain fool, and let it go at that. When I recollect toiling in those terrible stock companies—and that fortnight in poor Bob Markham's 'Springtime Roses,' and back to stock again, and then the breakdown, and the hospital!"

"What a silly title!" said her cousin. "Springtime Roses, I mean."

"Poor old Bob died, writing that play," said Clytie. "We used to think he put his soul into it—and it failed!"

"The mail, Marie?" asked Mrs. Hoffman.

"A letter for Miss Temperton, m'dame," the servant said.

Clytie arched her eyebrows at the theatrically colored envelope.

"Funny that the managers knew my address!" she commented. "Oh, I see! Forwarded from the hospital, of course."

She rapidly read the typewritten sheet, crumpled it disdainfully, and dropped it in the wastebasket. A smile



"But a rouge pot—ah! It reminds me so of what I've learned to dread."

"Such a comfort to realize you're rid of the awful business forever!" Mrs. Hoffman remarked briskly.

"Ah!" breathed Miss Temperton, staring out at the rain. "That's it. Am I?"

"Good heavens!" cried the other, with a gesture of apprehension. "You've just confessed that you were a fool, that you have no idea what made you stick to it!"

"Quite true, Gertrude; and yet—"

The girl was interrupted by the knock of a maid-servant on the door of the bedroom.

of amused derision still clung to her lips as she left the room.

Mrs. Hoffman sauntered to the window and looked out. The corpulent figure of an elderly man was visible in the gray fog. He was tramping ponderously over the crushed stone of the long driveway of Windywood, bundled in a heavy raincoat. Mrs. Hoffman gazed at the fat pedestrian with the motherly interest of a matchmaker. His name was Vawtree, he was her guest, he was a quadruple millionaire, he was taking the morning constitutional prescribed

by his doctors for the gout, and he was the man who wanted to marry Clytie Temperton.

But Clytie? Mrs. Hoffman knew that Clytie had promised him an answer, and her eyes mechanically sought the wastebasket. The discarded envelope confronted them. It bore the flamboyant superscription of a well-known firm of theatrical managers.

Mrs. Hoffman's mind flew to an inference. Obviously, Clytie had just been tempted to return to the stage. Was there no way to clinch the girl's present hatred of her former profession, so that such temptations need never be feared? In that case, the matchmaking matron of Windywood reasoned that Vawtree's suit would immediately prosper. Mrs. Hoffman sighed.

"Beg pardon, m'dame?" said Marie, concealing a yawn.

Mrs. Hoffman, having forgotten the servant's presence, started a trifle uneasily.

"Why are you so sleepy?" she retaliated.

"We were late last night, getting back from the play," explained Marie. "Last night Julia, and I, and the second gardener, we went to the theater, m'dame, in Kipskill."

"I hope you enjoyed it," vouchsafed Mrs. Hoffman.

Marie raised both hands tragically.

"Ah, m'dame, it was so sad!" she said. "It was a comedy, but so sad! The wretched theater, it was of such uncleanness, and the poor, starving actors—pouf!—they meant us to laugh, but one could have cried in pity for them. Julia, she has been what you call stage-struck, and now she is so no longer, after that play in Kipskill. It was a lesson—such a forlorn thing to see!"

Again Mrs. Hoffman started, but not this time with uneasiness.

"A lesson?" she mused intently.

"Mr. Vawtree's valet would go to the matinée there to-day," chattered Marie. "But not I! Br-r-r! I shall hate the theater now forever, and so would any one."

"Tell Parker to have the limousine ready at two o'clock," said her decisive mistress. "And telephone to the Kipskill theater to reserve a box this afternoon."

"For the valet?" marveled Marie.

"No—for me," said Mrs. Hoffman. "I shall give a box party."

The employees of Durgan's Iron Works had been transported up the Hudson for their annual excursion, and a broken shaft had compelled the captain of their boat to put in at Kipskill for repairs. Consequently, the wrathful excursionists opened their dinner baskets aboard the steamer, instead of at the riverside park which they had been promised; and after dinner they trooped ashore in the melancholy drizzle, the men morosely bent upon mixed ale, and their wives and daughters morosely apprehensive of trouble.

It was young Tom Shea, an assistant foreman, who discovered that there was a dramatic entertainment in the little city.

"Better steer the boys into the theater, sir," he advised Mr. Durgan.

"It's only a cheap rep show," objected Durgan, eying a billboard. "It'll be bum. The boys are mad enough already."

"Well," said Shea, "better they should let their mad out at any kind of a show than soak it up in a barroom."

He also eyed the dripping billboard. The fatuous name of the afternoon's play was "How Girls Are Won." Tom Shea spelled out the words, and they seemed to make his big shoulders twitch curiously. The fact was that pretty Nora Kennedy, on the voyage up the river, had gently refused to marry him, for the third time within the month.

Mr. Durgan paralyzed the ticket seller at the Kipskill Opera House by securing two hundred of his best seats. The price of the tickets was twenty cents each, and Tom Shea distributed them among the sullen ironworkers. He was careful to reserve a seat for himself next to the one that he had assigned to Nora Kennedy; and she appeared to be greatly surprised to see



Clytie involuntarily shuddered, although she had heard the jest hundreds of times.

him, after the curtain had fallen at the conclusion of the first act.

"Pipe the swells going into the box," said Tom. "I guess it's a fine show."

"I guess," replied Miss Kennedy coldly, "that it is the worst I ever saw."

The party from Windywood was composed of Mrs. Hoffman, Clytie Temperton, Vawtree, and young Anstruther, a Princeton boy. Clytie, as her cousin well knew, had not been near a playhouse since her illness. The mustiness of the shabby place revolted her nostrils; the slam of the seats and the squeak of the solitary fiddle hurt her ears with an almost physical pain. Mrs. Hoffman, glancing at her offended face, felt satisfied.

"These stock companies are fun," confided Anstruther. "We guy the life out of them in Trenton. Once we broke up a show so it went stranded the next day."

"It was a silly shame to make you come here, Miss Temperton," muttered Vawtree.

"I'm afraid I shan't ever enjoy any

theater very much now," said Clytie.

The curtain rose on a love scene, and a catcall in the gallery made Clytie glance upward. The balcony rail was lined with hostile, vacantly grinning faces. When a man there imitated the sound of a kiss, the audience loudly expressed its appreciation. Clytie involuntarily shuddered, although she had heard the jest hundreds of times. She turned to the stage.

The girl who was trying to act the humorous love scene was about Clytie's age, but her thin face, in its mask of rouge, looked old and haggard. Occasionally

her timid and despondent voice faltered in a speech, and the gallery jeered shrilly.

"She's going all to pieces!" exulted Anstruther. "I say, this is a lark, isn't it?"

"Just imagine such an ordeal every day of one's life!" Mrs. Hoffman said, watching Clytie narrowly.

But Clytie's excited eyes were fixed on her flimsy program.

"What's the matter?" asked Vawtree.

"I know this play, whatever they call it," murmured Clytie hurriedly. "It's poor Bob Markham's 'Springtime Roses.' I know every word and move in it."

"Asinine sort of rot!" Vawtree grumbled.

The actress on the stage made her awkward exit, and the audience hooted mock applause; there was in it an almost savage note of malevolence. Clytie again surveyed the gallery. "I begin to remember," she said.

Aware of a vague change in her,

Vawtree glanced at her in surprise. Her eyes were no longer clouded with indolent aversion. They had a defiant, dancing flash of challenge. Her cheeks colored slowly. She might have been an eager young recruit, hearing the bugle call for his first skirmish. Vawtree thought that she had never been so handsome. He quite envied the rowdies whom those gay eyes defied.

Now Clytie hardly saw the crowded theater. It seemed to her that she saw instead poor, half-crazed Bob Markham, toiling over his play in his tenement-house room. She had consulted him there once, about an alteration in her part. Now she could see his fanatic's face, as he told her how he had prayed for his play, how he had put his soul into it.

"An audience at a play," had said Bob Markham, "is a sort of a great, rough giant, to be fought until he is kindly. He can be very kindly. He wants to be. But you and I—people of our breed—must fight him. For the giant's sake, for the sake of truth and poetry, we were born to fight him."

Miss Temperton tightened her fingers over the railing of the box.

"Here's the guy in the black gown again!" exclaimed Anstruther joyously. "More sport, what? She does look tired of it!"

"Tired?" Vawtree snickered. "Drunk, most likely."

"My gracious!" gasped Mrs. Hoffman, rising primly from her chair. "Do you really think she— Oh, this is absolutely too terrible! Come, I'm sure we've had enough. Where's Clytie?"

Clytie had disappeared. She was stumbling behind the boxes, through a dim passageway, which led to the stage. Beyond a metallic door she encountered a man in his shirt sleeves, who had his hand on the shoulder of a weeping, black-gowned woman.

"Now, you brace up for the next act, Maggie!" he said.

"I can't get away with it!" wailed the woman. "What's the use? They've got me beat. I'm down and out. Those hoodlums have got me beat."

"Are you the manager, sir?" demanded Miss Temperton.

"Yep," grunted the man, peering at her through the semidarkness.

"I want a job for the afternoon," said Clytie. "I'm ready to go on, sir, right now."

The manager looked as if he thought she was demented. Clytie smiled; she was not quite sure herself of her sanity. Nevertheless, she could no more have resisted the combative power that dragged her than she could have held her footing against the pull of a tug-of-war team.

"Listen!" she said breathlessly. "I was in the original cast of this piece. I know it backward. My name's Edith Ray, and I played *Agnes*."

"I guess you played her b-b-better'n I'm doing," whimpered the tearful woman.

"And that gallery won't beat me, sir!" continued Clytie. "Give me a chance. It won't cost you anything. I'm dressed for the part, all right. I want to fight that giant in front. Give me a chance, next act."

The manager shook his head incredulously.

"You're crazy!" he mumbled.

"Maybe," said Miss Temperton grimly; "but I've played stock leads for Stein in Newark, Harrisburg, Omaha —" She reeled off a string of names.

"Hey?" snorted the man, pricking up his ears. "Worked for Jake Roth in Louisville, did you? Well, I—I dunno. I reckon you're game, anyhow, and sort o' scrappy."

"I am," laughed Clytie. "Are you?"

"Yep," said the manager. "A fellow's bound to be scrappy in this business, when you've got good stuff to hand to the audience and they won't take to it."

He scowled at the canvas curtain that screened them from the noisy iron-workers. Clytie, tingling with the joy of combat, clenched her fist and laughed again. The observant manager chuckled.

"You're on!" said he.

Even young Anstruther was shocked

when Miss Temperton joined the trio from Windywood in the limousine after the play.

"But I beat them!" she maintained triumphantly. "I fought them down. I made them like the play, and understand it. Oh, how I hope Bob Markham knows that I made them like it."

"Well, what was the good of it?" groaned Mrs. Hoffman, in despair because of Vawtree's stony and horrified countenance.

Clytie rubbed the moisture from the window of the car, and saw on the sidewalk Nora Kennedy and Tom Shea, walking hand in hand, shamelessly and obliviously.

"Look at that girl!" begged Clytie abruptly. "I picked her out in front, and played to her. And when I'd finished poor old Bob's great speech about the happiness of love, I could tell by that girl's pretty face that I'd won. I was sure of it."

"What was the good of it?" repeated her dejected cousin.

"Nothing is so good," Clytie said, "as to make a fight—the sort of fight you feel you were born to make. You've reminded me this afternoon why I stuck to the stage, Gertrude. Please ask Parker to hurry. There's a letter in your wastebasket that I want to answer by wire."



The Clever Mr. Wu

ON one of his visits to the United States, Wu Ting Fang, one of the most brilliant men of his race, had as his neighbor at a dinner party in New York a débutante whose beauty was far in excess of her brains. She tried to think of something pleasant to say to the distinguished visitor, and finally, thinking that Wu knew no more about English than she did about Chinese, she leaned forward, and asked him sweetly:

"Howee muchee you likee Amelicah?"

Mr. Wu looked at her for an instant, and then, with a pronounced drawl, and the most Bostonese accent possible, he replied:

"My dear young lady, I beg your pardon. I can converse in English."



The Etiquette of Funerals

WHEN Joseph G. Cannon was speaker of the national House of Representatives, his daughter, Miss Helen Cannon, had a hard time keeping him from mortally offending the daring people who called him to the telephone when he had settled down for a quiet evening at home. Although she generally managed to take all the calls herself, there was one night when the telephone operator and fate conspired against her.

A prominent senator had died, and the correspondent of a New York newspaper called the speaker on the telephone to get the names of the House committee which he would appoint to attend the funeral.

"Mr. Speaker," said the voice at the other end of the wire, "whom are you going to send to Senator Blank's funeral?"

There followed a line of picturesque language, and Mr. Cannon wound up the sentence by saying:

"I haven't seen Mrs. Blank yet, and I won't make up the list until I do see her."

The correspondent could not understand why Mrs. Blank should be considered in a formal action taken by the House.

"You idiot!" exploded the speaker. "I want to see whom she wants! There are a lot of fools in this town that I wouldn't have come to my funeral, and I want to show Senator Blank the same consideration."

BENJY AND THE OUTDOOR SLEEPING PORCH

By Hildegarde Lavender

Author of "Ten Minutes Late," "The Old Beau's New Wife," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

IF Mrs. Ridpath had hearkened to the advice of a great many persons of a great many sorts, when her husband died, it is doubtless true that the story of her son Benjy would have been differently written. There were, for example, relatives who pointed out the desirability of placing Benjy at once in an orphan asylum, where he would be no care to her at all, while she busied herself in some remunerative employment. There were neighbors who said that the boy was big for his age, and that it would be easy enough to pass him off for fourteen years, instead of his actual eleven, thus enabling him to get his working papers and to enter at once the ranks of the self-supporting. He was a bright lad, these people said, and it would be no real hardship to him to be an office boy, or maybe a helper in the grocer's at the corner, or a messenger; and if he was set on learning he could go to night school.

In addition to these, her more intimate counselors, there were others, if Mrs. Ridpath had only known it. There were wiseacres who could tell her just what part of her earnings should be spent upon rent, and what upon food; and they could even go farther, and tell her what cheap foods would contain the

necessary carbohydrates, and proteids, and whatnots to sustain life. And there were philosophers who could have pointed out to her that maternal love is an essentially selfish and unwise sentiment, wreaking harm upon its object, and laying up a future of unhappiness for itself. But to all the advisers alike, Mrs. Ridpath turned a deaf ear. She declared to the relatives that she would never part from Benjy, never, never; that he was all she had to live for, and that she intended to keep him with her, even if she died in doing it—she was an illogical poor thing! And to the neighbors she replied that Benjy was to get some schooling, come what might. And to the learned fixers of standards of living, she said nothing, being happily unacquainted with them. But she went on buying the best meat and vegetables that she could afford, and serving the same as bounteously as possible to young Benjy. And to do these things she had to work very hard, indeed, cleaning some city offices in the early hours of the morning, and the late hours of the afternoon. She might consider herself very lucky to have them to clean, so the Democratic captain of the block in which she lived gave her to understand; many men in his position



She manufactured an unblushing lie to account for her son's shortcomings.

might have gotten the job for a woman who possessed a husband of voting capacity, instead of for a widow; but he was not unmindful of Mr. Ridpath's past services.

In addition to the city offices to which she repaired in the dim hours, Mrs. Ridpath had a private clientele for whom she cleaned. The result of all these labors was that she was enabled to keep over Benjy's head the same modest roof that had sheltered it during the lifetime of Mr. Ridpath. But her engagements left her little time in which to superintend her own home, or to oversee Benjy's manners and morals. And, perhaps strangely, they left her with but little appetite for the food that she provided.

Mrs. Ridpath had never heard of moral suasion. When Benjy was disobedient, she cuffed him. When the neighbors complained of him, she gave

either him or them—it was generally immaterial to her which—a tongue-lashing. When the truant officer, calling to report that Benjy was more frequently absent from the seat of learning than present at it, happened to find her at home, she manufactured an unblushing lie to account for her son's shortcomings, and to save him from the truant school. Afterward, catching him while the memory of the interview was still strong in her, she gave him, as she herself expressed it, "a wallopin' he wouldn't forget in a hurry."

In all the circumstances, perhaps it is not strange that Benjy grew to be a holy terror in the first three years after his father's death. All of the wiseacres—relatives, neighbors, and students of social conditions—could have foreseen that. They could all have told Mrs. Ridpath all about it if she had only given ear to them. But the one thing which they might have failed to foretell her was that, out of the disorder, and the discomfort, and the dirt, out of the noise and the street, out of the disobedience and the cuffings, the misbehavior and the tongue-lashings, there grew up, strangely enough, in Benjy's heart, a misshapen, stunted specimen of the flower of filial love. Benjy loved his mother according to his lights. The feeling had sporadic manifestations. He had been known to come in from the streets on Saturday afternoons, and to clean—as he understood the term—the cluttered, dirty rooms in which they dwelt. He had thrown mud

upon a neighbor's new dress as a mute expression of his anger at cosmic injustice—his mother was wearing an old dress, an exceedingly old one, even on gala days. He had blacked the eye of a boy who had disparaged his mother's looks—though, indeed, there was about her in these times but little trace of the charms that had won Ridpath years before.

One of the things that the critics could have foretold—did foretell—came to pass when Benjy was almost fourteen, almost of an age to be presented with those keys to the freedom of life, his working papers. He was arrested for creating a disturbance—in company with other youths of high spirit—on an elevated train, one Sunday afternoon. He escaped with a reprimand that time. Then he was arrested again for the high crime of playing baseball in a narrow street—it was the street where he lived, and the nearest ball ground was some miles distant, but those extenuating circumstances did not mitigate the offense. Next, since it was becoming the fashion to arrest Benjy Ridpath, one of the neighbors had him "summoned" on the theory that he knew the whereabouts of her diamond earrings, mysteriously removed from the sugar bowl on the top shelf of her closet, which had been a secure jewel case for her during all the years she had possessed the gems. Benjy was guiltless of even knowing that she possessed diamonds—he wouldn't have known a dia-

mond from a piece of glass; this was proved to the satisfaction of the court. But Benjy was beginning to have a bad name. Two or three more escapades, two or three more court appearances, and he was an "incorrigible"; and the judge snapped at Mrs. Ridpath: "Since you can't manage your boy any better than this, Mrs. Ridpath, you'll have to give the State a chance to make a good man of him." And Benjy,

white, sullen, frightened, with uncomprehending rebellion in his eyes, and in his heart a perfect fury of lonesome dread, was sent to a reformatory. After four years, he came out—it was arranged upon some technicality. He had been committed to stay until he was twenty-one, but his poor mother had accomplished the impossible; she had managed to interest indifferent people in her son, and for some trumped-up reason or other he was let out, in her custody, at eighteen.

Benjy, emerging into the society of the free, was a very different Benjy from the frightened lad who had gone away. He knew many things now; he had made friends. He knew, for instance, that there was no justice in the world—what had he ever done that the police should be "always pickin' on him"? He knew that all men were inwardly or outwardly dishonest—one of the fellows in the reformatory had taught him that. Some weren't caught, that was all; and some were so clever that they even had had the laws fixed to suit themselves—big



She ate next to nothing—only drank big cups of tea from the teapot that sat all day on the back of the stove.

thieves, these, directing great corporations! He, Benjy Ridpath, started ill-equipped to compete with such. But there were plenty of small ways in which one could be successful. Even if unsuccessful, one would be accorded no worse punishment than had already befallen him, guilty of no crime at all! Benjy, in other words, emerged a thief in everything but achievement.

His mother was thinner than she had been when he was sent away. She coughed a good deal. She ate next to nothing—only drank big cups of tea from the teapot that sat all day on the back of the stove. Benjy found his intentions suddenly complicated by a wave of—he didn't know what it was. It seemed compounded of all the fear and loneliness he had felt when he was sent away, together with something more poignant and searching yet—something that made him sick and faint, as he had been the day when a baseball had hit him in the stomach. The neighbors—new ones, for his mother had moved to cheaper quarters during his absence—told him that it was no wonder she should be going into a consumption, up at the hour she was in the morning! When it was gray and chilly—and her hands always in water, and her knees on cold, hard, office floors of stone, and concrete, and marble—it was enough to give any one "tuberculosis," they averred.

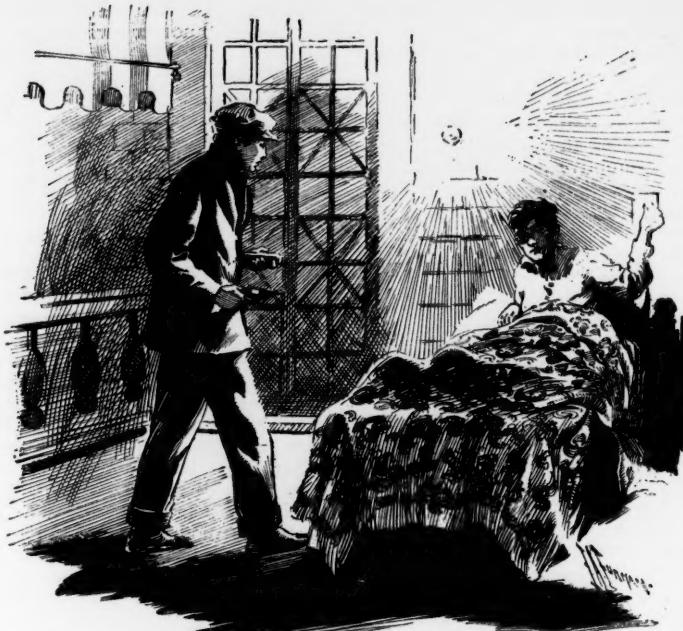
Was there nothing to be done, Benjy asked, in a cold dew of terror. But the neighbors were of the opinion that there was nothing at all to be done. If you were marked, then you were marked—and that was all about it. They had seen too many took off in the same way to have any belief in any of the newfangled things the ladies at the settlement were always a-talkin' of. No, there was nothing to be done. Benjy eyed his mother's hollow temples, her dry, sunken cheeks, with silent panic. It seemed to him that they grew daily more and more marked with death.

But Benjy's enlightener as to the ways of the world, Kid Foy—Kid, who aspired to be a real gang leader—put

hope into his heart. All that was needed to cure any ill was money. Money was to be had by theft. And the particular theft on the carpet at this time was one up in Fordham. Was Benjy game for it? Benjy was.

Nevertheless, he was a very nervous lad when he made his maiden effort at burglary two or three nights later. He had a diagram of the house, which he had studied carefully. It had been furnished by the housemaid, who was Kid Foy's promised bride, and who was going to leave certain doors and windows conveniently unlocked that night. Benjy knew exactly where the valuables were, thanks to the accuracy of the young lady's chart. It occurred to him once to wonder why Kid Foy had so generously admitted him to the opportunity of this particular job; but he had been obliged to be content with Kid's explanation that it was pure generosity that induced him to let his young friend "in" on the profits of a singularly rich and easy undertaking.

He entered the drive at the dim street corner marked on his map. Below him, down a steep slope, half a mile away, the lights of a trolley flashed. He half wished he were on it, fleeing from golden opportunity to his mother, coughing there at home, in the small, dark room. But this was not the time to back out. He must meet Kid at two o'clock at a saloon a mile distant. He might even now be watched for evidences of unworthiness. He crept on in the shadow of a lilac hedge, sweet in the spring. He reached the house, a quarter of a mile in from the road. Above him there was a wide veranda—that was according to the schedule. He was to swing himself up to it by means of the twisted rope of wistaria vines that draped it. He felt for the rope, found it, pulled himself up on it, and stood on an upper balcony. He paused for a second, to wipe the sweat of fear from his forehead, to still the thumping of his frightened heart, to get his bearings. And as he stood, very still, in the dense blackness of the spring night, he heard, at his elbow it seemed, a cough—his mother's cough.



"Hello!" said the latter conversationally. "I thought I heard something—don't shoot, if you please."

By a great effort Benjy succeeded in retaining his hold upon the electric lantern he carried. He also managed to stand rigid. Then, as no further sound followed, he turned slowly, pivoting on his felt heel. Almost behind him, in one corner of the wide porch, was dimly bulked a cot bed. He could not make out, in the density of the spring midnight, whether or not it was occupied. He only knew that it was not down upon his chart, although the open French window, by which he was to enter the house, was immediately beside it. And while he stood peering into the corner, the cough came again—from the cot. It was, then, occupied!

Benjy was debating whether the code he had just adopted demanded that he should go on into the house, despite the unexpected obstacle, or whether common sense demanded that he should quickly vanish over the vine-laden rail,

when his problem was solved for him. There was a sudden, white glare of light. An electric bulb in the side wall of the house flared into brilliancy. The cot and its occupant were fully revealed to Benjy, Benjy to the occupant of the cot.

"Hello!" said the latter conversationally. "I thought I heard something—don't shoot, if you please. I'm a non-combatant." His hand was still at the button in the wall by which he had switched on the current.

If Benjy had been more experienced in his business, he would, of course, by this time have been out of sight down the wistaria ladder, and halfway out of the grounds. But he was very much of a novice. So he stood still, staring at the young man.

"I ain't goin' to shoot," he said finally, by way of breaking the silence.

"What—er—were you thinking of

doing?" asked the young man. And he coughed again.

"Say," said Benjy, with sudden animation, "have you got tuberculosis?"

"It has been so diagnosed," was the reply. "But it is disappearing. Why? Are you making midnight explorations among consumptives, or what?"

"They say me mother's got it," replied Benjy. "Do you mean yours is gettin' better?"

"That's what I hope," answered the young man.

"They said me mother couldn't be cured."

"Who said so?" The question was belligerent.

"Oh, all the skirts what live in the house with her," was Benjy's comprehensive reply.

"Don't you believe it! With plenty of fresh air and nourishing food there's no reason—Does your mother sleep out of doors?" the invalid broke off to ask argumentatively.

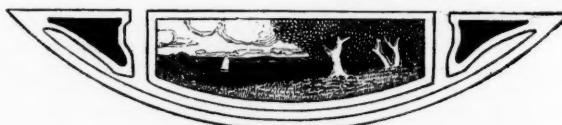
"Out of doors? On Greenwich Street? Say, what do ye think of that?" Benjy appealed to the silent night.

"Arthur, who on earth is that you're talking to?" inquired a feminine voice.

The figure that seemed to belong to it approached another window on the balcony.

"I've forgotten to inquire, mother," replied Arthur. "But don't come out—he's a young man who came, I'm afraid, with some predatory intention. No, no! Don't ring for the police! We're discussing the treatment of tuberculosis now."

"Dere's one ting about it," said Kid Foy a month later, when he discussed with his fiancée the strange story told by his lieutenant on the morning after the projected Fordham robbery, and the stranger outcome of it, "dere's one ting about it. A guy dat could mistake your directions an' could go to a house one full block sout' of de one you tells him, ain't even goin' to make his mark as a classy burglar. It's just as well he knows it in de foist place. An' since he fell in wid a bughouse lot dat's all for sendin' his modder to one of dem open-air joints for tuberculosis, an' gettin' him a job near to her—since he fell in wid a nutty crowd like dat, dere's no use kickin'. He wouldn't have done much in our line, anyway—too soft. Now, dere's anudder young feller—"



The Diplomacy of Woman

SENATOR CLAPP, of Minnesota, the chairman of the committee that investigated presidential-campaign contributions last fall, was at one time attorney general of his State, and ever since then some of his friends have called him "general." The senator is a Christian Scientist, a direct man, and very strong on telling the truth. Little "society lies" never get by him if he can detect them.

On one occasion, after he had delivered an address to the veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic in a Western State, a lady was presented to him by one of his friends, who said:

"General, Mrs. Blank has been very anxious to meet you."

"Oh, general," gurgled the lady, "I remember you so well, and I wanted to tell you that you look as young to-day as you did when you were in the Union army!"

"Madam," replied the senator, "that is, indeed, a compliment. When the war broke out, I was four years old."



The Parasite

By Helen R. Martin

Author of "The Fighting Doctor," "Tillie: A Mennonite Maid," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JEAN PALELOGUE

CHAPTER XXX.

IT was not until Judge Randall, pale and stricken, turned upon her with the accusation that she had let this thing happen in order to free herself—in order to go to her lover—that Joan for the first time wondered how it *had* come about, and what had been Catherine Tyson's purpose in bringing it about. And immediately, with what seemed to her an almost uncanny divination, she saw the answer.

"It was Miss Tyson who wished to free me," she quietly affirmed to Randall.

"Miss Tyson! What motive would *she* have had for doing this? It was Doctor Brooks, who had every reason for wishing to free you."

"Oh," exclaimed Joan, "he has had *nothing* to do with this!"

"We shall see," Randall retorted, his intense, though controlled, indignation and suffering manifest in what seemed to Joan the terrifying sternness of his face.

They were in the music room—one of the four large rooms opening from

the wide hall that ran through the house—and as Randall strode to the telephone in the rear of the hall Joan heard him—as, white and still, she stood waiting—call up Doctor Brooks' office.

"Doctor Brooks, this is Randall," after a moment's waiting his deep voice spoke again. "Will you tell me, if you know, whether it was Mrs. Randall—Laura Claiborne Randall—who took Bannis away to-day?"

A moment, and then: "Ah, I presume you know, then, *where* she has taken him?"

A brief pause, followed by Randall's statement: "It was, I understand, you who managed this coup?"

Another pause; then again he spoke: "Exactly. So I have been led to understand. Well, you've done the job very thoroughly."

Another long moment of silence at this end of the line; then Randall's voice ironically once more:

"I must at least thank you for your frankness in admitting your questionably honorable part in it. Your motive was, of course, purely chivalrous!"

A moment later the click of hanging

The first installment of "The Parasite" appeared in the November number of SMITH'S.

up the receiver was followed by his steps returning to the music room.

Joan drew back almost in consternation from the somber pain of the eyes that met hers as he again joined her.

"It is not necessary," he said quietly, but with a distant coldness, "for you to perjure yourself any further. Brooks admits his part."

"His part! What part?" she breathlessly demanded.

"The part you and he planned he should play. Why should you keep up any farce about it? He *admits* his part, I have told you."

"Doctor Brooks did not tell you I had any part in this, Judge Randall! If you think he said so, you *misunderstood* him."

"A gentleman doesn't implicate his accomplice in his dishonor when that accomplice happens to be a woman. No, he did not even mention your name."

"Accomplice! If he had anything to do with this, his accomplice was Catherine Tyson."

"And you. You who have so much to gain by it. Why are you too cowardly to acknowledge what you have done? Isn't it enough that you have traitorously betrayed your trust without—"

"Don't say it, Judge Randall! You will be so sorry afterward—when you know how mistaken you are. Call Doctor Brooks again, and ask him whether I was his 'accomplice.'"

"He would, of course, acknowledge it!" Randall scoffed. "Do you *forget* that only a few days ago you told me how 'wrong' you felt it was to be keep-

ing Bannis from his mother? 'Wrong!' he mocked her. "Your highly original ideas of wrong!"

"You will not believe Doctor Brooks or me—then ask Miss Tyson! Or," she begged, beside herself, and hardly knowing what she did say, "call up your wife—wherever she is—and ask her! You will believe *her*!"

"My wife!" he repeated, with a lift of his brows.

"You *would* believe her?"

"The stab is that I cannot believe *you*—*you* who are—"

He checked himself. He came and stood before her, gazing down into her white face.

"Tell me the truth—the *truth*!"

"I have not betrayed your trust. I had absolutely no least hint of this 'coup' when Bannis and I got into Catherine Tyson's car. I had no idea who the woman was who joined us at the LaFayette until she had disappeared with Bannis."

For a long moment their eyes met; then suddenly a light seemed to break through the blackness of Randall's countenance.

"Great God! Even losing Bannis was not worse than thinking for a moment that you—were treacherous to me."

"You don't believe it now?" she pleaded.

"I was for the moment a fool, Joan."

"Oh!" She drew a long, quivering breath.

"I know—simply know, somehow—that you would not have betrayed my trust in you."



He came and stood before her, gazing down into her white face.

"I never, never would have!" she whispered, big tears in her eyes.

"And if you ever do go to Brooks"—he compressed his lips for an instant—"you'll not do it treacherously?"

"No!"

"It was Brooks and Catherine Tyson, then, who did this thing. It was Brooks who brought Laura to Eastport and took her to Catherine. Catherine managed the rest of it," he affirmed conclusively.

"I never dreamed that Doctor Brooks and Miss Tyson ever saw each other."

"They probably do not. But—he wants you—and—"

"And Miss Tyson wants you. And as Doctor Brooks sympathizes very strongly with—with Mrs. Randall," said Joan, "I suppose he felt justified in doing this."

"He has told you he 'sympathized' with Mrs. Randall?"

"Yes."

"You and he talked of—that?"

"Two weeks ago he brought me a letter from Mrs. Randall, in which she pleaded with me to give Bassis to her—and she—she wrote me the whole story."

"The whole story!"

"Of her—trouble—with you."

"The whole story from *her* view of it. And you believe it all—as she told it?"

"I could not know you as I have since we have lived here together and not feel sure that there must be some other interpretation than the apparent one of the circumstances she details."

"Thank you for that, Joan."

He turned from her, and began pacing the floor in front of her. "So poor Laura appealed at last to *you*! God help her! How she has suffered if she could so humiliate herself!"

"Yes—she has suffered."

He stopped again before her. "Ah, it was this letter, then, that made you so pensive of late? I see—I see! And I had supposed Brooks was the cause of it."

"It was the letter; I could hardly bear it."

"And yet, Joan, I shall never rest until I've got back my boy."

"Then you have some reason—some right—that even *she* does not know of—for you are not a selfish or a cruel man."

"You believe in me so thoroughly, Joan? And I for a moment stupidly doubted *you*! Joan, the time has come when you must hear this story of my divorce from my side of it."

He motioned her to a chair by the window, and threw himself into a deep armchair at right angles to her. He talked there for a long time. Her embarrassment changed to interest as he continued. What he said is best told in his own words.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"At the time of our marriage Laura was, I am sure, the finest-looking woman I have ever seen, with a soul built on the same noble lines, in some respects, as her beautiful person. She had a wonderful magnetism and charm, though by her very nobleness of mind, her spiritual dignity, she was a bit too awe-inspiring to win people closely and sympathetically—as *you do*," he suddenly added, contemplating his listener with what seemed to her a new light of understanding in his eyes. "For instance, I find it is somehow easy to talk to you to-night of this—to break the silence of years, and tell you all about it. I wonder why?"

He looked at her as if at a loss to explain to himself the phenomenon he was realizing.

"Laura was not," he went on, "one to draw out other people's confidences, not even when one was as near to her as I was. She wouldn't have been interested in them. Her interests—especially her *human* interests—were exceedingly circumscribed. It was her utter sincerity, her fine and high sense of honor, her absolute purity, that raised her to a height above most people. But a height, you know, is nearly always a narrow point on which to stand, and I've observed that the wider view it affords is often lost in the lone-

liness of the elevation. Lofty people are seldom humanly sympathetic. Passionately as I worshiped her—and, being a man of 'temperament,' as we say, love was pretty much a life-and-death matter with me—I was never close to her spiritually. It would be impossible for me, I think, ever to love in that way again—without the foundation of a comfortable, everyday comradeship. But Laura and I were about as greatly at variance in our attitude toward life as two people could well be. I was instinctively radical in thought and feeling, and had been liberally educated in the broader atmosphere of Europe; while she, naturally conservative, had been narrowly educated in a New York boarding school. So we didn't see many things from the same angle. For a long time I strove very hard to find a ground of closer meeting with her. It seemed so essential to me that we should come together spiritually—essential not only to our happiness, but to the very integrity of our marriage. But she was so steeped in her prejudices, the prejudices of her class—than which, I verily believe, there are none more unconquerable—that I soon came to accept with resignation the fact that she never could understand the things which to me seemed so big and important in human life and in our development, and that I must simply adjust myself to a wedded life of much inner solitude.

"Don't misunderstand me—we never quarreled. Laura was too dignified, and I too disinclined to force my convictions, my ideals, on any one not naturally in sympathy with them, and we were both too much in love with each other ever to quarrel.

"When, after a time, I came to avoid all discussion with her of those ideas and theories which she disliked, it only convinced her that I had become, through contact with her greater common sense, less visionary and wrong-headed, and so her own complacency and happiness in her marriage increased in proportion as my self-withdrawal and loneliness became more definitely a thing to be reckoned with in my own

consciousness. Some women are like that—just so blind to the real self of another who may be their nearest and dearest on earth—strange as it may seem.

"The arrival of Bannis, however, seemed to go very far toward compensating me for all the disappointment in our union which I constantly strove to conceal from Laura.

"But of course we differed utterly in our ideas about the boy's rearing. Had we remained together, these differences of opinion would undoubtedly have caused some clashing, for Laura had never in her life known what it was to yield up her own will, to defer to a differing opinion; and I, on the other hand, while yielding every point to her that did not seem to me absolutely essential, was simply adamant where Bannis' real welfare was concerned. As Bannis was only two years old when she—left us—there had, of course, been very few collisions of opinion between us, though she was always very much annoyed at my persistence in certain things of which she strongly disapproved—talking baby talk, calling him by nicknames and pet names, telling him fairy tales, and teaching him to repeat Mother Goose rhymes. Common sense and absolute fidelity to fact—which she erroneously called truth—were the principles on which she stood. Of course, I could not have my child's development stunted by such cold-blooded tactics as these. I let her do as she pleased; I did not dictate to or criticize her. But I claimed an equal liberty for myself and *my* theories. In fact, I tried to make up to Bannis for his mother's blindness to the needs of a child.

"I think it was the strain of this unending effort at adjusting my life to a temperament so at odds with mine that made me presently succumb so readily to typhoid fever—and an extremely severe case of it I had.

"And now comes the episode of which I can tell you very little because I don't know much about it.

"My convalescence was very slow because my illness had been long—so long

that the weakness of my heart and circulation left my brain unnourished with blood, and I continued, for many months after the fever was all gone, to be a victim of delusions of all sorts—like the delusions of delirium. I can remember being at times entirely in doubt as to whether certain impressions were dreams or realities. And this uncertainty made me so sensitively reticent in the presence of the doctor that I think he was entirely misled as to my real condition. The nurse, it seems, for purposes of her own, did not let him know of my singularly prolonged mental cloudiness; so that he thought me restored to a perfectly normal state—mentally—long before I was.

"This nurse—a pretty, sympathetic, and intelligent young woman—seemed to me, as I clearly do recall, to give me during this time an understanding companionship such as I had never had with my wife. I was naturally affectionate and demonstrative, but I had always been discouraged by Laura from expressing, except in a formal way, at stated times, my very deep and strong feeling for her. But this nurse petted me. She understood and agreed with all my darling theories. She flattered the egotism that is two-thirds of every male creature. She encouraged me to pour myself out to her. I had been starved, and she fed me. In my weakness I clung to her. I adored her.

"When—many weeks, perhaps months, later—I had come again into full possession of my powers, and the nurse had gone out of my life, I tried to realize what had happened—just what it was that had driven Laura away.

"I had a dreamy, awful memory of my wife's having ordered Miss Dorsey out of the house, and of my refusing to let her go; of Miss Dorsey's astonishing refusal to go; of my having caressed the girl, doted on her.

"But what had been *her* idea—the nurse's—in it all I could not see. Had she been obsessed with an infatuation for a man half out of his mind, weak as a baby? It did not seem possible.

"I later found in my possession, among a lot of checks returned from my bank, several quite large amounts paid to Miss Dorsey. I had a hazy recollection of having been led to write them while my hand was so weak that it had to be held and guided. Perhaps *they*—the checks—had been the young woman's idea in what she had done. I did not know.

"I turned at last to Laura. I tried to see her. She would not see me. I wrote to her. She sent my letters back unopened, demanding only that I send her our boy.

"At last she consented to let Sally talk to her. They had once been devoted friends, and Sally had at first been almost as much outraged for Laura as Laura herself was. But she had incurred my wife's deep and bitter resentment by having taken Bannis out of her reach at the time of the clash here; Sally says she did so at my instigation, not really understanding the trouble. I don't remember anything about it, strange as that may seem. At any rate, Sally *believed* my vindication of myself, and consented to plead for me with Laura.

"She told her that, *so far as I was aware*, my relations with the nurse had not been criminal; that I had not been in a normal mental state, and did not clearly remember those first weeks of my convalescence; that if I had erred the excuse I pleaded was my unaccountability and the long self-repression exacted of me. All this I had had to tell my sister—

"It was no use; Laura would not forgive or condone. I was a monstrous brute, a vicious, weak hypocrite, and she would never live with me again.

"For four long years we have waged the war over Bannis. I have stood ready always to compromise, to share him with his mother. But she, most unwisely, would never consent to that—would not consider it for a moment. It would have seemed to her like compromising with dishonor, with vice. For the boy's own sake, she thought it her duty to get him absolutely away from my baneful influence.

"I, in my turn, have stood on my legal rights quite as much for my son's sake as for my own. I would not wrong him by giving him over to a narrow, prejudiced upbringing—a rearing that, if he has aught of me in him, would cramp and dwarf his whole nature; I would not wrong him by depriving him of all that I can do for him that his mother cannot do—by condemning him to the bitterness of believing his father to be a debased scoundrel. All this I'll spare him. With my last breath I'll suffer him.

"It is not *I* that have made Laura suffer. It is her own blindness and pride, which have been so much greater than her mother love—and how great that mother love is I know only too well—as to have kept her away from her child when any hour in the past four years, until last August, she might have returned to him. But now her chance is gone. It is too late. She cannot return—but neither can she have Bappis."

He paused. Joan, her face alive with her deep interest in his story, sat far back in her chair, her eyes fixed on him with a rapt fascination.

"And now," he abruptly questioned her, "what have you to say, Joan? Let me see it with your unprejudiced eyes—have I been right or wrong in keeping my boy from his mother?"

"Do you yourself have any doubts?"

"If ever I had had a doubt Laura would have profited by it. Believe me, I have felt her suffering too keenly to have kept Bappis from her if I had not believed I did right to keep him."

"You did not keep him from her; she refused to come to him. So it looks to me."

"And the circumstances that led to all this—if you had been in Laura's place—would you, do you think, have felt it all to be so past condoning?"

"It seems to me I would have known you, have understood you, too well to—oh, suppose the worst she believes really did happen. You were not yourself. You were ill. All I can say is that a woman like that is deeply to be pitied. I believe the worst suffering

in this world is the sort that comes from our own blindness, from our own littleness. I do pity her for what she has suffered—and—yet—"

She hesitated, a faint color coming into her face; but she added resolutely: "I would not, in your place, leave Bappis with her. It would, as you say, wrong him too much."

"Though I have never doubted that, and though I have felt that it was not I, but herself, that separated her from Bappis, yet it comforts me, Joan, to hear what I have done justified—by you. I have seemed to myself at times very hard, even cruel, to Laura."

"She has been harder, more cruel. That is why her suffering has been greater than yours. But—but, oh," she suddenly broke forth impetuously, breathlessly, the flush in her face deepening painfully, "you will think I am self-interested in taking your part—in encouraging your determination to get Bappis back."

"Self-interested!"

"So that I can stay on."

"But since you don't want to 'stay on,' how could you speak more *disinterestedly* than in 'encouraging' me to get Bappis back? For if Bappis did not come back—" He lifted his eyebrows questioningly.

His taking it for granted that in Bappis' absence she had no place in this house brought into Joan's eyes a strained, almost tragic look, which, in view of the facts, Randall scarcely knew how to interpret.

"However," he deliberately added, "as Bappis *will* come back, this episode, Joan, has not freed you."

"But until he comes back?" she asked, with a wistfulness in which he read her longing for freedom.

"Until he comes? Well?"

"It might be a long time before you have him back. A year, perhaps. So until I am needed again I could hardly stay here on your hands."

"Needed! But it seems to me you've taught *me* to need you about as much as Bappis does! I'm just about as helpless. A man does like his comforts, you know, and a peaceful home with

an atmosphere of kindness and sympathy. I am sure," he said, with a gleam in his eyes as they rested upon her, "I have not realized, until brought face to face with the possibility of your abandoning me, how much you *have* made me need you. And now, of all times, with this other heavy trouble hanging over me—Joan, don't you see what an ordeal it's going to be to me to have to tear Bassis away from his mother? It will require all the resolu-

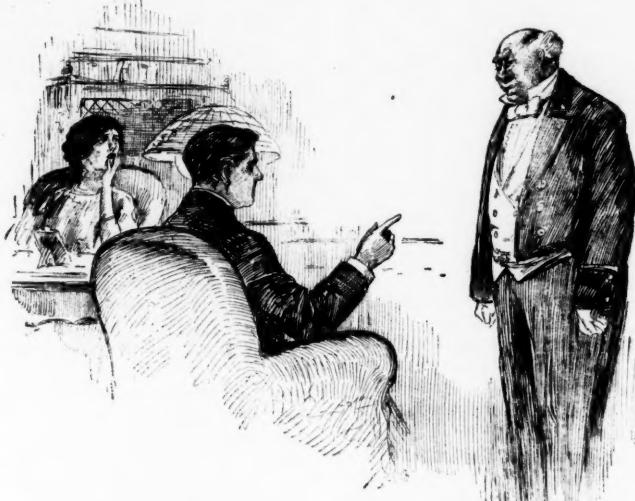
"To Brooks?"

She was silent for a moment, looking down at the hands in her lap.

"I want to stay here."

"Why?"

"This is the only home I have ever known. I have been so perfectly, deeply contented and happy here. I love it—I *love* this home—and the bare prospect of being sent away from it makes me realize that no other place can ever seem so truly home to me."



"Answer that I will see her here, at my home, when—when she brings Bassis with her!"

tion I can summon. And I shall need you near me—you! Give me a little time, Joan, and I'll try presently to look at it from your side—unselfishly. But I can't give you up to Brooks yet."

"You *want* me to stay on, then?" she repeated; and instead of the despondency he looked for, the soft happiness that came into her face held him staring at her wonderingly.

"You are *glad* I want you to stay?" he asked incredulously.

"Oh, yes!"

"You don't want to go away?"

"No!"

"Joan," he answered, his voice sunk deep, "is it only stupid inability to understand you that makes you always appear to me such a bundle of inconsistencies and contradictions? I wish you would honor me with an explanation of yourself. I have given you tonight my own painful story. Tell me yours. You must know what I mean—the things of your unmarried life that made you appear in a false light, that made you seem what I am now so sure you were not."

"I think," she slowly answered, "that deep in your heart you never did think

me just what I appeared to be—else I can't believe you would ever have trusted Bappis to me so completely as you have."

"Perhaps you are right. Perhaps instinctively I have—"

He checked himself abruptly, as if afraid to trust himself.

"Your story, Joan—tell it to me."

Before she could answer, the sharp ringing of the telephone in the hall startled them both; Randall sprang up to answer it, but the butler was ahead of him. In tense expectancy, they both waited, Randall not returning into the room, but standing in the doorway, his hand clutching the portière; while Joan sat forward in her chair, clasping the arms of it to stay the jumping of her nerves.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Miss Tyson, sir," Briscoe announced as he came from the telephone, "wants to speak to you."

"Ask for her message—tell her I am engaged," was Randall's prompt answer; and, turning to Joan as Briscoe went back, he added: "I couldn't trust myself—I'd use language not even lawful over a wire, let alone fitting from man to woman."

Briscoe returned. "She would like you to come round to the LaFayette, sir, for an interview with her, she says."

"Answer that Mr. Randall is unable to oblige her," he directed, turning at once into the room, and, flinging himself again into his chair, his face white and harsh. Joan thought, as she looked at him, that though she had never since she had known him seen him other than kind to any one, it would be a quite dreadful experience to incur his anger. She had come very near to experiencing it herself to-night in his momentary distrust of her.

Briscoe again returned. "She says it's important, sir. She must see you, and if she can't see you to-night when and where can she?"

Randall sat upright. "Answer that I will see her here, at my home, when—

when she brings Bappis with her! Tell her that—then hang up the receiver."

"Yes, sir."

They sat in silence while Briscoe delivered this message.

Scarcely had he hung the receiver when a loud ring at the front door was followed by the startling sound of quick, noisy little feet in the hall.

Randall and Joan—both suddenly rigid with the shock of it—clutched the arms of their chairs. The next moment Bappis himself rushed into the room.

With a cry, Joan sprang to catch him, as, dirty and disheveled, he staggered toward her; but, instantly realizing that in this moment his place was first in his father's arms, she stepped back, and let Randall take him.

Sobbing and shivering, the child clung to his father, while Randall, speechless, held him close. For an instant no sound save the boy's hysterical sobbing broke the palpitating silence of that room.

But suddenly, wriggling around in his father's arms, he feebly called: "Tante Joan!" And Randall, nodding to her to sit down, placed him in her lap.

It was then that they saw, for the first time, through the mud and mire that covered him, bruises and blood-stains on his face and hands; and at the same moment Briscoe, appearing in the doorway, spoke to them:

"The man that brought Bappis is here in the hall, sir."

"Show him in."

The portière was held aside, and Randall went forward to meet the muddy-booted farmer who came hesitatingly into the room.

"I seen the little feller on the road," he explained, "on my way here fur to-morrow's market, and I picked him up and brung him along."

"I can never repay you," Randall exclaimed as he motioned the man to a chair by the fire.

"I ain't after no *pay*!" the man protested, tentatively seating himself. "All I'm after is to make sure he's safe home with his own folks."

"Thanks to you, he is. Tell us, please, just how and when and where you found him."

"It was dark—near six o'clock—when I come on him trudgin' along in the mud. I pulled up, and asked him where he was makin' fur, and he sayed he was goin' home to 'Tante Joan and Obber.' I didn't know no sich places, and I asked him where they was at, and he sayed 'In Eastport.' So I took him up then, and tole him I'd bring him there. And then I seen he was hurt, and so, on the way along, he tole me how he was in a runaway automobile, and it went so fast it upset and throwed 'em all out in the road, and that whilst the chaw-fur and a lady was bein' carried into a farmhouse, he—this here little tike, mind you—cut and run to git back home. It was a straight road fur ten miles, and he wouldn't have got lost, but he'd have froze in the road, I guess, if I or some other farmer comin' in fur market hadn't saw him. I asked him who the lady was that was along with him and got hurt, but he sayed he didn't know her name—she was 'Miss Tyson's lady.' Then I asked him was his mammy and daddy livin', and he sayed no, but 'Obber and Tante Joan' was. 'Oh,' I says, 'them's folks, then, not places. What's their sek—male or female?' You see, I was seekin' a clew to where I was to fetch him—and he sayed they was *both*. So then I says—to git at a clew: 'What's their names—and *your* name?' 'Bappis Randall,' he tole me. 'Randall,' I says. 'Now, it couldn't be you was Judge Randall's little boy!' And when he says yes, he was, I most laughed—I thought he was puttin' on. Fur, you see, with all that there dirt and mud on hisself, he does look tough, don't he? But when he says his home was up here on the avynoo, where I knewed all the swells lived, then I begun to look up and take notice. It didn't seem it could be I was haulin' a tony kid like that in my old cart. But when I got here your nigger he knowed him. Golly! It had me beat when the nigger sayed yes, Judge Randall *is* the kid's daddy. Well, judge, this here's cer-

tainly an honor—to have it to say I know you person'ly, and have set and talked with you in your own settin' room. I certainly won't soon forgit this here trip."

"Have you any idea," Randall nervously inquired, when he could get in a word, "about where the accident took place?"

"No, I hain't exactly. But the little feller must have been walkin' a long time, fur he tole me he'd passed the church with the Shanghai rooster on the steeple—a weather vane it is—and that there's way back nearer to Annapolis than Eastport."

It was now nearly nine o'clock, and Randall, issuing quick orders that the farmer should be given a hot supper and then be brought to him in the library, applied himself to discovering, with Joan's help, whether Bappis had been seriously hurt. The child was too exhausted to be questioned, while together they undressed and washed him and put him to bed. A neighboring physician—not Brooks, of course—was summoned to reassure them, and to dress the little boy's very bad bruises; and when, after entirely relieving their anxiety, he departed, Bappis almost instantly fell asleep.

"I shall have to leave him with you now," Randall whispered to Joan outside the bedroom door, "while I go down and reward this farmer, and then—and then, Joan, Laura has been hurt—I shall have to go in search of her—to learn where and how she is."

"Of course."

"I shall not return until I know."

"No."

"But if I am long away, of course you will hear from me."

"Don't worry about anything here."

He looked down at her, and held out his hand. "Good night, dear little faithful friend!"

But as he released her hand and she turned back into the child's bedroom another telephone call arrested them both.

"It may be news of her!"

He fairly leaped downstairs to the receiver.



"Now, it couldn't be you was Judge Randall's little boy!"

So long he stopped below that Joan went back into Bannis' room to wait there until he should bring her what news he had.

When at last she again heard his step in the hall she went out to meet him that their voices might not disturb the sleeping child.

She saw at once that he looked pale and shocked. Without speaking, he motioned her to a window seat at one end of the hall, and they sat down together.

"The message was from the Annapolis hospital. She—Laura—and the chauffeur were both taken there. She—the doctor says she is fatally injured. An internal injury. Her mother and father are with her. They have—told her that she has only a short time—and so"—he spoke haltingly—"she asked them to phone and tell me that Bannis was missing. It was one of the doctors who telephoned, and I told him he could comfort her with the news that Bannis is here, safe and well. I told him I would hold the line while he ascertained at once, if possible, whether

both risks?"

"I think of a way, Joan. Since she forbids me—with her dying breath, poor, poor Laura!—to come to her, *you* must go with Bannis."

"Oh, but if—if she is dying—to send *me* to her deathbed!"

"Bannis shall not go except in your care."

"If she refuses to see you, I can't think she is dying."

"The ruling passion strong in death," he sadly repeated. "Her ruling passion has always been her pride. If she is very ill—and dying—she need not, you know, see you, or know that you are there. It is only with you," he firmly repeated, "that I will trust Bannis away from me."

"Then I will take him."

"You will leave on the early-morning train, Joan?"

"Yes," she acquiesced.

"Thank you—thank you!"

A cry from the child's bedroom arrested them both:

"Tante Joan! Obber!"

They hurried to him—only to find

it was her wish that I come to her and bring Bannis with me. The reply was that I should *send* Bannis to her."

"Oh!" Joan exclaimed. "Are you sure—"

"What?"

"That it is not a ruse to get hold of Bannis again?"

"My God! I never thought of that."

"You promised to send him?"

"Of course."

"You will risk it?"

"What I can't risk is that she die without having him with her the few days that may be left to her."

"Is there no way," Joan tremulously asked, "of avoiding

that he had been dreaming, and had called out in his sleep. He lay on his back, his arms spread wide, his head thrown back. Joan turned him over, smoothed the covers, and drew them closer about him.

"I shall sleep with him to-night," she whispered. "He is restless and nervous—he's had such a shock. He may be waking in the night."

"Very well. Perhaps, as you will have to start away so early in the morning, you'd better go to bed at once."

"Yes, I will; and you—you look so tired," she said solicitously, her eyes on his haggard, shocked face; "won't you go to bed, too, and try to rest?"

"No sleep for me to-night." He shook his head. "I feel as if I should never sleep again."

"But you cannot blame yourself."

"I am not such a sophist as to blame myself. But—she is so young, so good and fine—to go out like this! And she has, through me, been so wretchedly unhappy. It is all horrible—horrible, Joan!"

"Yes—I know."

"But there—I must not keep you. When you get to Annapolis, you will write to me promptly—of everything?"

"Of course."

"And summon me the moment you need me?"

"Yes."

"Good night." He took her hand, and raised it to his lips. Then, abruptly turning away, he left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A week later the long struggle between Arthur Randall and his divorced wife—a struggle which for him had been going on for three years before hers began, and which, at the initiation of their joint siege, had found him already a spent and saddened man—ended in the death of Laura Randall at the Annapolis hospital.

The whole tragic breach between them had been none the less pitiable because, from beginning to end, it had been the woman's own limitations of

mind and spirit that had occasioned it; and no one had ever more keenly felt for her in her self-inflicted misery than the man whom she—stupidly, it must be said—had always believed to have ruthlessly imposed it upon her.

Her people being as anxious as she had always been to avoid newspaper notoriety, the automobile accident and subsequent death of one of the victims was not heralded with any hint of the true circumstances of the episode.

Thus closed a lamentable chapter in the life of a pair as ill-mated as blind fate had ever brought together in "the holy bonds of wedlock."

After the funeral, just a day before Joan's return to Eastport with Bappis, Randall was summoned to New York to consult with his deceased wife's attorney concerning some details of his son's maternal inheritance; and before he was able to get back Joan had been home a week.

A circumstance that met her on her return made her glad for the respite his absence gave her. She found, to her astonishment, that while she had been away all her personal belongings had been removed from the room next to Bappis' nursery which she had occupied to another part of the house—to the south bedchamber of a suite of two rooms and a bath—the north bedchamber of the suite being Randall's.

The discovery of this alteration naturally gave her a shock.

What did it mean? Their "compact" had precluded this—

Had he, then, meant only to wait for his divorced wife to die? But he had never supposed she was going to die this side of old age.

Never for a moment had he failed to respect, with the utmost delicacy, the perfectly clear understanding between them. How, then, could she possibly regard this high-handed proceeding save as an unwarranted breach of contract? If she meekly acquiesced in it, as all her life she had let her career be molded for her—if in a crisis like this she did not assert herself—how could a man like Judge Randall help despising her?

It was an absent-minded companion that Bappis found in his Tante Joan during the next few days—a companion whom he regarded curiously, wonderingly as she moved about with heightened color, dreamy, liquid eyes, and an oft-recurring trembling and quivering of the soft arms that held him and of the hands that ministered to him.

"What's the matter, Tante Joan?" he would demand.

"Why, what do you mean, Bappis? What is the matter?"

"You're—you're *different*."

"How 'different'?"

"I don't know. You look funny. You don't play with me as much—and you don't talk. And when I talk you don't answer until I nearly holler at you."

"Oh, Bappis!" she smiled. "I'll take myself in hand. I'm—I'm just tired, I guess."

A long letter from Doctor Brooks, which came to her a few days after she reached home, served to distract her temporarily from the stinging thought of Randall's impending return.

The doctor's horror—as he wrote her—at the tragic outcome of his little plot with Miss Tyson quite overshadowed his chagrin at the consequent routing of his own purposes. Of course, so long as there had been a prospect of Bappis' being some day restored to his mother, so long had there seemed a chance of his ultimately claiming for his own the woman whom he loved, and who was so preposterously chained to a man who retained her, unloved, at his side, solely for his own selfish domestic comfort and convenience. But now that Bappis was indeed motherless—through the vain connivance of two people who, for their own sakes even more than for that broken-hearted mother's, would have risked their lives to avert just this horrible contingency that had occurred—now, to be sure, he could scarcely hope that fate would give him that which he so passionately coveted.

He ended his lengthy and impassioned writing by begging Joan to an-

swer now the question on which she had never yet satisfied him—how much did he really mean in her life? How much was he necessary to her happiness? What hope could she hold out to him who cared only for her? Did she care enough to run risks—to break away from the unnatural, the monstrous, union into which she had let herself be beguiled? Did she not recognize that the selfishness, the want of a high sense of honor, which had taken advantage of her youthful inexperience, of her homelessness, her unhappiness, was quite the same which had first outraged and insulted a wife in her very own home and then cruelly withheld from her through many years her little child? Could she go on living with this man, denying her own youth, her right to love, to *life*?

Joan lay awake nights, pondering her reply to this letter, struggling to unravel the tangle of her own strange new emotions, her burning sense of many, many things that of late had dawned upon her horizon. She was confused, bewildered. She dreaded, yet longed for, Randall's return, that with his coming she might perhaps clear the haziness in which she found herself, get her bearings again, learn to know her own heart, which in her present perplexities was entirely mysterious to herself—as mysterious as, she was sure, it always had been to Arthur Randall.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The business that had called Randall from home kept him away two weeks.

Joan's reception of him upon his return, her demeanor misleadingly serene and self-possessed, would certainly have given him no clew to the trembling of her soul before him but for the burning brightness of the eyes with which she bravely met his as they clasped hands.

That the shadow of the recent tragedy hung heavily upon him was at once manifest to her in his subdued greeting, the somberness of his voice and manner.

She had written him all the details of Laura's end; so, to their mutual relief, they did not need to touch again upon that.

He reached home in the morning, and the varied business that had accumulated in his absence kept him occupied all day—obtruded, indeed, even upon his half hour alone with her over their coffee in the library after dinner, a college president choosing that time to pay a postponed call to request him to address a congress of teachers, ministers, and several varieties of callings involving education of one sort or another—upon the very live question of teaching religion in our public schools.

The college president courteously, though briefly, disposed of, Randall returned to his coffee, his pipe, and Joan.

He had scarcely expected to find her still waiting for him, and the thrill with which he saw her sitting just where he had left her was almost an ecstasy to his sore and harassed soul.

Indeed, as he felt again, among other much stronger feelings, the soothing comfort of her sympathetic presence—after the bleakness of these recent days of her absence in which he had found his house, without her, as dreary as a vault—he realized the lifting of the shadow of death which had so fearfully encompassed him.

"Gods, Joan, it's good to see you here again! I couldn't have got up courage to come home if you had not been here."

"Fancy a thing of my puny size giving 'courage' to one of your dimensions!" she smiled as her eyes rested upon his substantial bulk lounging in his easy-chair by the big library table, his pipe between his fingers, she sitting opposite him before the fire.

"It doesn't happen to be a question of avoirdupois, however. Something a bit more subtle. What are *your* views, by the way, if you have any, on the subject of 'teaching religion in our public schools'? I'm in for an address on the subject, if you please. I have some personal convictions on the matter, but they could be so briefly stated in two or three sentences that I don't for the

life of me see how I'm going to string them out into an 'address.'"

"Of course this congress is all for the affirmative?"

"Its avowed purpose is to discuss ways of making the teaching of religion a part of all education. President Loyd wants a special department of religion in *his* college."

"Bryn Mawr, which surely stands for a pretty high ideal of culture and of womanhood," said Joan, "has no sort of religious service as part of its daily or weekly routine—and it seems to me that the entire freedom permitted to students to choose their own form of religious expression would lead to a higher, broader religious tone than any perfunctory service could induce."

"Go on!" he ordered her as he lazily smoked. "You will help me to thrash out my own ideas. Indian fashion, I'll let my wife do the heavy work while I smoke and take my ease."

"I do have some 'views' on this subject that I should like to flaunt," she nodded, really welcoming a philosophic discussion which should give them a respite from personalities, which should for a merciful moment push into the background the vivid consciousness between them of that suite of rooms overhead, and her own trembling fear of the approaching hour when she would possibly be called upon to deny his unwarranted claim upon her and defend her individual freedom; while at the same time her perverse fancy viewed with a half-humorous scorn that precious commodity, her "individual freedom." What did she want with it? What—what?

"Don't you usually find that the most genuinely religious people you know," she gravely discoursed to him, "are those to whom religion is so wholly a matter of living that they have outgrown the necessity of making it a separate department, requiring a temple and a deity?"

"What ho! What have we here? You'd better address the congress!"

"I'd like the chance!" she said, with a suddenly kindling countenance. "It seems to me a step backward to intro-

duce the teaching of religion as a *separate* thing into the public schools. Aren't you surely teaching religion when you teach history, literature, science, even geometry—anything? It's *all* religion when taught by a religious individual, one who recognizes that what religion really means is a spirit of loving kindness—and that's *all* that it means essentially. The moment you try to reduce it to a formula or a department you are in danger of dogmatism, which is, and always has been, death ultimately to real religion and to freedom of thought."

"All very true, my dear, precocious young person. However, for children—of all ages—we must have kindergartens of religion—Sunday schools, churches, altars, a 'personal God,' an inspired Book, even, perhaps, creeds. I agree with you, though, that I should hardly call any one mature who *required* these helps. The truth is, Joan," he said earnestly, "a new religion is emerging in the souls of men, the essence of which is that one cannot himself be healthy or happy unless the race is healthy and happy. Devotion to the welfare of the whole is the new gospel, the expression of which we see—don't we?—in all the big reform movements of the day. And surely there's a divine element in it—calling for the highest self-abnegation. Look you how many among the privileged classes in all nations are now coming out from their long intellectual slavery to class prejudice into the large freedom of recognizing principles of justice that must inevitably make their own easy berths in life very insecure; could any religion be finer or nobler than that?"

"I foresee that your lecture before the congress will resolve itself into a talk on twentieth-century socialism."

"It won't hurt them if it does. How is it, Joan," he suddenly demanded of her, "that in the ultraconventional environment in which you've been reared you should have come to such an extremely independent outlook upon life?"

Her eyes fell as she slowly, hesitatingly replied: "My real life has been

lived so entirely within myself. In my solitude I've forged things out which, perhaps, I never should have thought of if I had had a more natural, a happier, girlhood."

"I, too," he gravely answered, "have never really been in harmony with my environment—have always been lonely. Do you know what it means to me, Joan, to have found a—a friend who is really such—who thinks and feels with me as I've come to realize you do? All my life those nearest my heart have been farthest from me in sympathy. In so far as I have been loved by my kin, it has been not for what I am, but in spite of it. I've always longed for a companionship in which I could be myself without constraint. It seems very wonderful that I've actually found such companionship with you."

"And there at Beechlands," she eagerly answered, "when every radical word you uttered found a warm response in me—I never could let you know what a sympathizer you had close by."

"Why not?"

"Shyness. And fear of having my sympathy misinterpreted, as I always knew my love for Bannis was."

There was an instant's silence between them, he smoking, she looking down into the fire. Presently he took his pipe from his mouth and spoke quietly:

"Will you do me a favor to-night, Joan?"

She thought he must hear the violent thumping of her heart. She could not speak. He waited a moment, then added: "Talk to me of yourself. Why should you withhold anything from me? There is no least thing concerning you in which I am not—to put it mildly—interested. I venture to say there's not a mortal between the poles *more* interested in all that concerns you. You've never yet told me your story. May I hear it now—to-night? There surely *is* a story?"

"Scarcely a 'story,'" she answered, with a long, deep breath of relief at the postponement of what so palpitated between them. "You'll find it a very

unromantic chronicle. No embellishments can make it anything else but commonplace and sordid."

She stretched out a daintily shod foot to the fender, and contemplated it thoughtfully as she related to him the story of her life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"You probably know how my mother was reared—what a carefree, luxurious girlhood she had in her father's home, and how his death, when she was eighteen, and her unworldly marriage to a poor clergyman plunged her into a poverty she was wholly unfitted to cope with. So when she was left a widow in frail health, with me on her hands, an infant, the one determination of her very inflexible will was that no matter what she did to prevent it, her daughter should never go through the humiliating poverty and drudgery to which she was forced; should never, while her mother breathed, work for her living; should always, at whatever cost to others—herself and her child included—be kept in the social world into which she had been born; marry in that world, and so establish herself firmly in her proper place in life. It was through my marriage—a rich marriage into a good family—that I was to free my mother from her long enslavement to drudgery for my sake, and free myself from my lifelong, necessary sponging upon friends and relatives. Once I was safely married, mother would lie back and rest—or die in peace.

"That was the teaching of my whole childhood—the one ideal held up to me—an advantageous marriage. Mother had no ideals for me above station and money. Everything that was done for me, my entire education, made for that. The way she slaved for it, sacrificed herself for it, humiliated herself in the dust to get me invited constantly to the houses where she thought it an advantage for me to visit! The passionate intensity with which she concentrated her whole mind upon bringing about her purpose, no matter what she had to suffer in the process! I was

swept along upon the current of her ambition into a life that was always so utterly alien to me—for never for an hour was I in sympathy with her purposes—that my real self was always submerged, never allowed to come to the fore, never found any sort of expression. Mother could not see how her course with me only served to defeat her own ends. I was 'put out' to charm, as a cow is put out to pasture, and my very consciousness of it robbed me of all power to charm—stultified all natural thought and feeling, froze everything decent in me. Lives built upon such artificial foundations always are the dreariest failures. Why, if an eligible man so much as glanced my way I at once became painfully sure that he saw through me, *knew* I was meant for a bait, that the dainty frock I wore was the hook of my line, that I was a shameless Jezebel. So, of course, I appeared self-conscious, stupid, uninteresting, a fool.

"I think I am naturally proud, and I know I am sensitive, and my whole childhood and youth were clouded to blackness by what I saw my mother enduring for me, by my secret inner rebellion against it all, by my being forced upon people who didn't care for me. How I've always envied people who were free *not* to truckle! Any one who was free to work and be self-respecting—servants, shopgirls, chore women—I envied passionately—they could so justly scorn *me*.

"I've been so distorted out of all semblance of my real self that not only has no one known me as I am—I've scarcely known myself. For instance, my natural inclination always was to give myself—but I was taught to restrain all my impulses and consider only expediency, what I would get out of it, what return would be made to me—even in such small matters as the feeding of servants, the paying of a companion's car fare. It was never suggested to me to be kind and good because to be otherwise was in itself unbeautiful, was to be less than the best one is capable of becoming. Why, the first natural outlet I ever knew was

my affection for Bannis. And when I found that he responded to my advances—how I let myself go then in my love for him—and all the time I knew that every one thought it a pose to attract you. I thought you yourself must be suspicious of my motive in such extreme devotion as I gave to him.

"Of course, the inevitable time had come in which I had openly rebelled against the career forced upon me, had refused to let my mother any longer slave for me, or to let myself be thrust as a barely tolerated visitor here and there and yonder. I rebelled most of all against my mother's using her hard-earned pittances in buying finery for me far beyond what I had any right to dream of wearing, and which I grew to *hate*. But, oh, the effect upon her of my rebellion! I can never forget it—it was so dreadful, so really frightful. She had sacrificed herself too long and too heavily to bear such a disappointment. I saw that I should simply kill her if I did what I so longed to do—drop the artificial and, to me, shameful life I led, and get to work to support myself and her.

"So I gave it up. I yielded myself—body, mind, and soul—to realizing her ambition for me. Weak you will call it. But I tell you that what appeared to every one who knew me to be my contemptible want of spirit was my one strength—the strength it takes to sacrifice one's life to another. You can fancy what resolution it took to refuse your tempting offer to me to be Bannis' governess. No one will ever know what I went through in that. For I had begun to see how futile, after all, was my sacrifice, and what an abject failure I should probably always be in the matrimonial market. And yet at the same time I knew it would be too bitterly hard upon mother if I dared to accept the governess' position. She would not be able to see it rationally. Her long years of scheming, since my very babyhood, had obsessed her."

Joan paused for a moment, and Randall, looking at her meditatively, remarked: "And so what appeared such

inexplicable folly and—yes, weakness, want of character—was in reality a quite Spartan heroism, though I can't help thinking a mistaken heroism. But we won't go into that. What I want to say is: There is sometimes a greater strength required in yielding than in self-assertion, isn't there, Joan?"

"Oh, I realize I could have faced an army of grenadiers with less force of character than was demanded of me in yielding my will to my mother's. Well," she drew a long breath, "you understand now, don't you, why I was so willing to marry you? Simply and solely for the sake of my worn-out mother. Oh, your proposal of marriage opened up heaven to me! If you had been Satan himself I would have accepted you. And don't you see how, under the circumstances, I could so much more honorably accept you than if you had professed any love for me?"

"I see," he said slowly, looking at her strangely. "I see."

"It seemed to me that night that you asked me to marry you that even for mother's sake I could not have accepted you if you had loved me—have used for my own selfish purposes a man's sincere feeling for me, when I had no feeling to give him in return."

There was a moment's silence. Randall broke it abruptly: "But why didn't you long ago, Joan, explain all this to me—your relations with your mother—your bondage to her ambition for you? Why have you let me so misunderstand you—cruelly sometimes?"

"So often I tried to tell you. But always the explanation seemed so like disloyalty to my mother. Indeed, it has seemed so to-night—putting her in the light of a vulgar schemer, making her appear so monstrously horrible. To explain myself at all only seemed like trying to excuse my own weakness and lack of stamina in not insisting upon living my own life. But," she said, with a long breath, "it was my pity and my affection that were strong—so much stronger than anything else in me. Why, my first thought when I read the story which your—which Mrs. Randall wrote to me," she faltered, "was re-

lief that I had not known it in time to prevent my marrying you. For I knew that if I had had that letter beforehand I never could have entered into a compact with you to keep her child from her. And that night after the Ridgeleys' dinner, when you asked me why I had not 'trotted out' my scruples before our marriage, I wanted so much to tell you of the letter—for secretly I was almost breaking my heart over it—and I did long so to hear your explanation, your defense of yourself. But I couldn't tell you—I was too afraid that a situation might develop in which you'd be obliged to scorn me if I did stay with you. And to leave you meant—you can see *what* it would have meant to my mother, who was resting at last—at last—after her long, dreary struggle. Oh, I feared the thought of her worn face more than I feared my conscience, infinitely more than I pitied Bappis' mother. And so—I did not tell you of the letter. And—and here I still am.. And that is all my 'story,' Judge Randall."

"Is it *only* your mother, Joan, that has kept you by me? Your mother, your affection for Bappis, your fear of outraged society—are these the only forces that have kept you from—Brooks?"

She turned white as silently she looked at him. She opened her lips, but her answer seemed to stick in her throat.



"There's just one thing," she found breath at last to speak, "one thing I've got to beg of you—"

"Are these *now* all that keep you from him?"

"Aren't they *enough*?"

"Our compact, Joan, has turned out as my sister predicted—a failure. We can't go on with it."

"But why?" she breathlessly asked.

"I discovered something while you were gone—discovered that my true home—my *only* home—is with you,

Joan. I have grown to care for you too much."

The color began slowly to return to her white face, but she did not speak.

"Too much to stand in the way of your highest happiness. Far too much to go on living with you by the terms of our compact. I knew this, Joan, the night you came to me with your request that I let you—give yourself to another man."

He paused, and, after an instant, added: "The time has come when I must release you—if you wish to be released."

"But I don't!" The words seemed to fly from her lips.

"You don't love Brooks?"

He leaned toward her, his voice for the first time losing its steady self-restraint.

"I don't want to go away from you," she reiterated, "so long as you want me by you."

"But I don't want you 'by' me—I can't *have* you by me—unless you love me, Joan, as I love you."

"Oh, but you don't love me!" she protested. "You only love—as you once said—your 'comforts.' Of course

I know you *like* me—I would feel it if you didn't. And I have felt that you *do*. But it isn't love that you feel for me. You are only trying to persuade yourself that it is."

"Isn't it, Joan—isn't it? Listen to me. It is through you—you—I have come to know that a love is possible which I once thought only an ideal dream—love that is something more than a passion on which one destroys oneself. A love that may be an abiding thing—not an ephemeral, feverish transport. A love that can transform all that is sordid into beauty and lowness. A love that gets into the fiber and tissue of one's soul, Joan, and becomes such a vital part of one that to cut it out would mean inward bleeding. *That* is what—in the past few hard, hard weeks—I have come to realize you are to me."

"But it can't be that I mean all that to you—I! Of course I have felt that I was coming to mean *something* to you. And, oh," she softly cried, "can you *imagine* what it has been to a bruised and battered thing such as I've been all my life to know myself needed, almost *necessary* to some one?"

"Bruised and battered" all your life! It has not put you out of shape, by the Lord! Rather it has molded you, child, into something so sweet and dear that the like of it I have not known among women. You have felt, you say, what you were coming to be to me. But I've held myself down too relentlessly for you to have felt more than the merest shadow of it."

"And yet do you know—"

She hesitated, her eyes softening to a dreamy thoughtfulness. "It seems to me I realize now—to-night—that from the beginning I did know, in my inmost consciousness, of the first little change in you toward me. And after a time just your presence in the house—your merely appearing in the doorway—would thrill me with the sense of your growing nearness to me. It was as if a live nerve went from you to me, making me feel every beat of your heart toward me. And it was then, for the first time in my life, that I began—"

She stopped short, a deep color flooding her face.

"Yes?" he pressed, with a burning intentness upon her.

"That I began to know, without understanding *whether* I was drifting. I began to know what ecstasy means."

Randall's answer was to rise, go to her, take her bodily from her chair, and fold her in his arms.

"Joan," he spoke after a moment, "it was a far-seeing scheme of fate's, making me propose to you. Little did I dream I was asking my true mate to marry me. We're going to be a happy brace, you and I. For we're comrades, Joan—comrades by the ruling of the gods."

He crushed her to him, kissing her, feeding his long-repressed hunger for her with an ardor of tenderness that made her, indeed, know ecstasy.

"But there's just one thing," she found breath at last to speak, bending back her head from his breast, "one thing I've got to beg of you—"

"Command—not beg."

"But seriously, I mean."

"Yes, Joan?"

"I beg you *not* to idealize me. I couldn't stand that."

"No?" He smiled down into her upturned face.

"Because really you *must* understand—I'm so entirely commonplace and superficial—and in some ways really so flabby weak—where my *feelings* interfere—"

"It is where your 'feelings interfere' that you are at your strongest, you know, you wholly feminine thing! And that's the beauty of you—the womanly beauty, Joan."

"But indeed, indeed, I refuse to be put upon a pedestal. For I could not live up to it, you know. And it would bore me too awfully to try. If you can love me for just my ordinary self and—"

"Since your 'ordinary self' is so far above most people's extraordinary—"

"Not at all," she anxiously protested. "By no means. I foresee you are simply destined to be disappointed in me—when you find me out."

"Find you out, you funny child!"

"For a person not at all deep—with a strong inclination toward adventure and recklessness—"

"*You!*"

"Even me—or perhaps *I*. You see, as I told you, my real self has never had a chance. But give it a chance, and there's no telling to what lengths it may go in frivolity."

He answered her with a long kiss. "What was it," he whispered, "that wrecked my other dream of happiness? Inhuman goodness, Joan—or what goes by that name. If you can manage to live down to me, dear darling, I'll try to live up to you—you sweet woman with the pure heart of a child, but with a woman's fire. Come to me, come to me, Joan!"

The birth of Bappis' baby sister recompensed a reluctantly delighted Aunt Sally—whose longing for a daughter had never been fulfilled—for the thwarting of her matrimonial ambitions concerning her distinguished brother.

Bappis, who had felt himself injured enough, in all conscience, during the past months, by Obber's insisting upon Tante Joan's giving *him* some time, attention, and devotion—a greedy share, too—regarded the arrival of a baby sister as insult added to injury.

"I never *said* you should get me one! I never *wanted* her to be born!" he wildly protested.

But when, one day, his father suggested that they might send the little intruder away—give her to Aunt Sally to keep—he discovered that his sense of brotherly possession outweighed his masculine greed for Joan's undivided devotion, and his peremptory prohibition of such a proceeding was followed by a cheerful acceptance of the inevitable.

The baby girl came also with balm and softening to a worn-out grandmother, grown hard and joyless in her hideous struggles for vulgar and artificial ends.

But while the grandmother went to her grave convinced that her labors had been crowned with success beyond her dreams, the happy young mother resolved, as she held the lovely little baby head to her breast, that the ideals she would hold up to this woman child through all her life should be ideals of service, not of gain; that her child's life should be grounded, not upon the shifting sands of worldliness, but upon the solid rock of nature.

"For in this way only can she ever know any real happiness," reflected Joan. "And in this way, no matter what befalls her, she can't miss some blessedness."



A New Way to Measure Time

SHE was a girl given much to out-of-door sports, and, although she entered with great spirit into everything that was done by her set, she put in only her evenings, and not her afternoons, playing bridge whist.

One night she got up from the table a big winner, and one of her friends inquired:

"My dear, I didn't know you played bridge at all. Have you played long?"
"Oh, no," she laughed, "not so very long—only four check books."

The Care of the Skin in Springtime

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

IN the spring the young man's fancy,"—and the young woman's? While she undoubtedly has a tendency in the same direction, yet she is more conscious of her beauty needs than he, and so her thoughts are upon the condition in which she finds her skin after a long season of trying and variable weather, close and superheated air, rich and heavy foods—that not only clog the system with débris, but are poisonous as well—and prolonged social or other activities.

The skin—of men as well as of women, for that matter—is very apt to show pronounced evidences of such usage in the springtime, for it is a powerful organ, as important as the lungs or kidneys, and throws off a vast amount of effete matter daily. During the winter, the skin is not as active as it is in warm weather, because the sweat glands are not in such constant use, and since perspiration is Nature's cosmetic and Nature's method of keeping the skin in fine condition, we must aid her with baths and other means; but this is just the season of the year when so many bathe less! Consequently, the skin becomes discolored, blemishes of one kind or another appear, and, in fact, more serious cutaneous conditions than these very frequently show themselves with the advent of milder weather.

Among the many substances deposited upon the skin are microbes in countless variety. A skin that is seldom bathed affords them the best possible means of growth. They multiply very rapidly, and enter the glands through the pores, setting up a number of local conditions, and are even known to enter the circulation, and so cause general disturbance. An unclean body or a neglected skin is, therefore, a most suitable soil for the development of disease-breeding bacteria; whereas, a skin kept perfectly clean, and sweet, and free from these invisible marauders, and abundantly supplied with good, rich blood, is practically germ proof. As has been so frequently said in these articles, the ancients were most fastidious in the preservation of nature's outer covering of the body; and of all modern people, the Japanese are famous for their use of the bath; it is a national institution, as it were. A Japanese will bathe in a cup of water, if no more is available, but—*he bathes!* And that is the secret of their remarkable freedom from certain diseases; scarlet fever, for instance, is unknown among them.

Any condition of the skin deviating from the normal, should, beside local treatment, receive some kind of constitutional attention, and especially is this necessary in the spring. Change of

diet is of first and paramount importance. "Tell me what he eats, and I will tell you what manner of man he is," might with equal truth and force be changed to—"and I will tell you the condition of his skin."

Overeating is a bad habit. We Americans, at least in large cities, err frightfully in this respect; we are still a very young nation, and, therefore, glutinous!

With the advent of milder weather, the amount of meat should be reduced; it is an extremely heavy food, and is very heating; its tendency is to coarsen the skin. Excessive meat eaters usually develop dull, oily complexions, and are elsewhere troubled with seborrhea or general dandruff—the skin on the body is itchy and falls off in perceptible little flakes, precisely like dandruff of the scalp.

Nature is prolific in the abundance of greens and acid fruits with which she tempts us away from the heavy, greasy, heat-producing, and fat-making foods of winter. These greens contain such substances as whet the jaded appetite when spring languor is upon us; they clarify the blood and clear the complexion. Dandelion, endive, watercress, spinach, and the like are all excellent medicines, and when combined with a dressing of lemon juice, olive oil, and a pinch of salt, their value is further enhanced, and they become at the same time most palatable food stuffs; since olive oil is a cleanser of the system, and a nourishing food, while lemon juice is well known for its manifold action upon the system in general. In fact, all acid fruits are especially valuable at this season of the year, pineapple and rhubarb especially.

Besides taking these greens in their raw state and as salads, our grandmothers had the correct idea regarding



Protect the skin with cream and powder before going out of doors.

their beneficial effect as spring tonics; decoctions of dandelion, camomile, and the like have gone out of fashion, but they retain their value just the same. Dandelion acts especially on the liver, and is, in fact, one of the best cleansers known, while growing freely in the open fields for all who come to gather it. The very gathering of this medicinal weed is a wholesome, skin-beautifying step in itself. The root

may be employed for tea, and the leaves prepared as a vegetable or a salad. Two ounces of dandelion root is boiled in one quart of water until it is reduced to a pint; half of this is taken daily between meals.

Sulphur has never lost its value in medicine, and is daily employed in one form or another for skin affections. Its internal use as a household remedy has gone out of fashion since large families of children have become a thing of the past; despite this, sulphur and molasses, as a spring skin tonic, has lost none of its virtue, as it still has a remarkably beneficial action upon the skin! Two tablespoonfuls of pure powdered sulphur is rubbed up with an almost equal amount of refined molasses; a teaspoonful or more is taken a half hour before breakfast and on retiring, for three days, omitted for three days, and repeated.

A very common spring skin trouble, and one that impairs the finest appearance, is general seborrhea, as mentioned above. The oil glands, instead of furnishing just enough oil, not only are overcharged with sebaceous matter, *but it is altered in character*, sometimes imparting an extremely unpleasant odor to the body. This condition prefers to show itself upon the face, scalp, chest, and back, but it may appear in other parts. An itching or burning some-

times accompanies it, mainly when it is of the dry variety; when oily, the parts are usually red, and when this appears upon the face, it is especially unsightly.

Now, it must be plain to any one that such a condition cannot be remedied by local measures only, since it springs from a general constitutional derangement; therefore, such procedures must be carried out as will cleanse the system



Oatmeal paste is wonderfully bleaching and healing.

of impurities; as will improve the appetite—for a rational and timely diet—the digestion, and the secretions. When the skin is oily, a dry powder should be employed, and a lotion that is slightly stimulating, yet mild and soothing—here is one that may answer:

Boric acid 2 drams
Orange-flower water 2 ounces
Rose water 2 ounces

Daub this on with absorbent cotton.

A good powder, in mildly oily cases, contains:

Oleate of zinc 2 drams
Powdered arrowroot ½ ounce

Dust over the parts with absorbent cotton.

Another good powder, more antiseptic and more beneficial in more pronounced conditions, is:

Salicylic acid 2 drams
Subnitrate of bismuth 1 ounce
Powdered oleate of zinc 3 drams

Mix and use in the same way.

When the skin is dry, itchy, and flaky, it sometimes requires nothing more than a soap containing camomile or sulphur. A carbolized zinc ointment is very beneficial; and the following cream, recommended by the late Doctor Shoemaker, is excellent:

Salicylic acid	.....	30 grains
Borax	.....	15 grains
Peruvian balsam	.....	25 minimis
Oil of bergamot	.....	20 minimis
Oil of anise	.....	6 minimis
Cold cream	.....	1 ounce

In those conditions of dryness with itchiness that attack so many at the change of seasons, and that can be attributed to nothing more than the weather, frequent applications of starch water, or a solution of one or two teaspoonsfuls of borax or bicarbonate of soda in a pint of water, is all that is required. Good results are often gained by drinking copious drafts of camomile tea and bathing the body in a decoction of camomile. Cucumber ointment and cucumber cream are also excellent soothing applications. Formulas for making these will be sent on application.

Expert beauty specialists abroad, and foreign physicians, who pay more attention to the cosmetic needs of their clientele than we do, appreciate the almost magic power of camphor to soothe and to whiten the skin. No régime having for its object the improvement, the healing, or the restoration of this wonderful and beautiful organ is without some preparation containing camphor. A cream that is soothing, bleaching, and slightly astringent, and which is in great

demand abroad by both sexes, and has established the reputation of more than one dermatologist, will be furnished to readers of this magazine on application. Care must be taken not to get this into the eyes—when used on the face—or upon jewelry or metals. It is particularly beneficial upon a complexion that is blotched from a winter's dissipation, or discolored and erupted through neglect and indifference to its needs. This cream, rubbed gently into the face and neck—always with the accompaniment of a due regard to diet, et cetera, et cetera—slowly, but surely, beautifies the skin, sometimes with surprising ease and rapidity. One application will, of course, not restore it; the skin must first be thoroughly cleansed and softened, the ointment is then liberally put on and rubbed in, leisurely, persistently, until considerable has been worked into the skin. The excess is gently removed with fresh absorbent cotton. The treatment is preferably carried out on retiring, so that time and non-interference with other cosmetics and conditions may give it full opportunity for action.

Aside from the measures referred to above, the skin—especially of the face and neck, and particularly of women—requires more than ordinary attention in the spring, because it has been put to hard treatment during the winter from a cosmetic viewpoint. Many women never cleanse the face properly in winter, but rely upon cosmetics and veils in daylight, and again upon cosmetics under artificial light, hiding imperfections with heavy powders and rouge.

By spring the skin is either ghastly, in its undisguised condition, or resembles a piece of old parchment. Soap and water, the usual agents employed to cleanse the skin, will not wholly remove the soil from face and neck, and when no other means have been used for months, it must follow that there is a deep accumulation of grime, germs, et cetera, imbedded in the pores. To remove this, famous beauty specialists employ sanded almond meal; the following is a favorite formula:

Borax 1 ounce
Glycerin 2 ounces



Acid fruits are nature's skin tonics.

Finest white sand 8 ounces
Sweet almonds powdered, or powdered almond-meal cake 20 ounces
Oil of bitter almond or benzaldehyde 1 dram

This makes a large quantity, and a fourth or an eighth of this can be put up.

The borax is dissolved in the glycerin with the aid of heat; the sand is then intimately mixed with it; and then the other ingredients added. The sand must be white and of the finest possible powder. This preparation is moistened and applied to the skin, is rubbed over and in it quite thoroughly, and allowed to remain on about ten minutes, when it is carefully and with very gentle movements "pinched" and ground into the pores. It is washed off and out by means of warm water sprayed on. The skin is then gently daubed dry and a bland cream or oil applied; this is likewise allowed to remain on ten or fifteen minutes, removed with absorbent cotton, and a good toilet vinegar sprayed on, followed by a light touch of rice powder. The skin is scarcely recognized after this "facial treatment." It stands to reason that repeated treatments of this kind will beautify the most hopeless-looking complexion. The face spray is an important adjunct to these treatments; it penetrates the pores, and at the same time stimulates the circulation. The toilet vinegar is refreshing, and acts as a skin tonic, besides making the tissues

firm, and perfuming the skin as well. Directions for making a reliable toilet vinegar can be had on application.

Another method of cleansing the skin of accumulated impurities is to bathe the face with a soap paste made in the following manner:

Soft green soap 16 ounces
Glycerin 2 ounces
Alcohol 1 ounce
Perfume to suit.

Mix the soap, glycerin, and alcohol, and add the perfume. A light-colored, nearly odorless, soft soap should be used. This mixture can be kept in wide-mouthed bottles or jars. It is rather stimulating when used on the face, and should be applied in very small amounts, dissolved in water. It is an excellent preparation added to the general bath.

Still another excellent application for the face, and addition to the general bath as well, is the

QUIREDA BATH MIXTURE.

Fine oatmeal 1 pound
New clean bran 1 pint
Powdered orris root 2-5 pound
Almond meal 2-5 pound
Powdered white castile soap 4 ounces
Primrose sachet powder 1 ounce

The finest Turkish toweling, which is almost like plush in consistency, is fashioned into squares slightly filled with this delicious mixture, and these are used as wash cloths; they are dipped in softened warm water and applied to the face. As the water becomes milky, thickened, and perfumed, the tissues are literally laved in it. Repeated applications, consuming a considerable time, result in a remarkable transformation of the skin in texture, its appearance resembling that of a little child. Unhappily, this delicacy does not last unless daily hygienic measures and skin grooming become the habits of one's life.

In the early spring, to protect the skin from the high, cutting winds, it is wise to apply a cold cream liberally, removing all excess and powdering carefully. It is also a good plan to protect a delicate complexion with a chiffon veil which effectually excludes biting winds

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

and acts as a fine screen to catch the myriad particles of dust and organic matter that would otherwise attach themselves to the skin. Such a veil should be renewed very frequently and washed almost after each wearing.

Further information upon an internal scavenger and general blood tonic will gladly be furnished those applying for the same.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

HANKY-PANKY.—This is very good for red hands:

Wool fat, hydrous 2 drams
Liquid paraffin 5½ drams
Vanillin 2 grains
Oil of rose 1 drop

Use frequently and freely by rubbing well into the hands.

HORTENSE.—A toilet "milk" is a very elegant liquid cream. These preparations are used as a substitute for cold cream, and are applied to the skin at bedtime, and upon the face at any time before using powder, to enable the latter to adhere more readily.

One of the choicest toilet milks contains the juice of cucumber for its bleaching effect, and is known as "Celebrated Cucumber Milk." Directions for making this delightful preparation will be sent to you upon receipt of a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

MAJOR.—For shaving purposes, creams—or pastes—soaps, and powders are used; the first two require the special ability of a soap maker to prepare them, but the powder can be mixed by a novice. You will find the following an agreeable powder:

Powdered soap 9 ounces
Starch 1½ ounces
Sodium carbonate 1 ounce
Powdered orris root ½ ounce
Oil of bergamot 20 drops

The orris root may be replaced by powdered soap bark; and a very little oil of orris may be added.

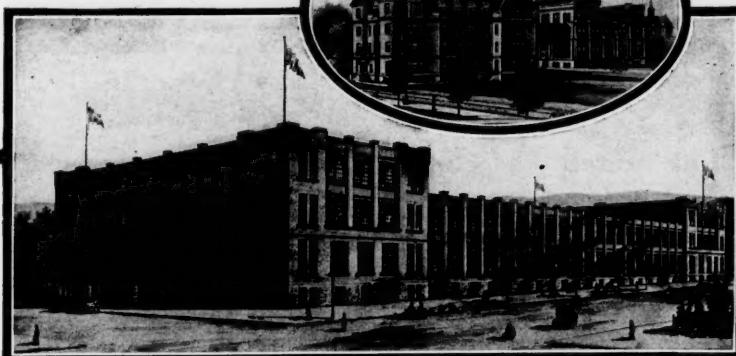
MRS. BENNETT.—The use of heavy powders will injure your skin in time; furthermore, the too evident use of powder upon the face is very inelegant. Try this lotion for your shiny skin, and then powder very lightly with pulverized rice:

Boracic acid 1 dram
Distilled witch-hazel 4 ounces

Mix and daub on with absorbent cotton.

If you will send a stamped, self-addressed envelope, I will mail instructions for bust development.

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Building Contractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Engineering
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechanic, Engineer	Automobile Racing
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	German Branches for Everyone
Surveyor	Agriculture
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Metal Mining	Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Explosive Fitter & Eng.	Mechanical Works
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Textile Manufacturing	Spanish
Gas Engines	Chemist
	French
	German

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

What Conscience Costs

By R. E. Olds, Designer

Let me tell you what it means to build a conscientious car. A safe, enduring, economical car.

A car that stands up under use and abuse, and that renders a service like Reo the Fifth.

Externals

Cars, like houses, may be largely built for show. The main attention may be given externals.

Such cars for a time seem to be most successful. But the ups and downs of Motordom show how inevitable is the reaction.

On the other hand, the man who builds Reo the Fifth today has built cars for 26 years. The demand for his cars is far larger than ever. Last spring it ran five times the factory output.

Such extended prestige is unique in this industry. And every man knows it is solely due to such principles as these.

Hidden Things

Our chiefest attention is given things which don't show. Yet you can easily

see that we neglect no external.

All steel is made to our formulas, based on vast experience. And each lot is analyzed twice, before and after treating. Whatever falls short is discarded.

Each important part, by actual test, is made very much stronger than necessary. No margin of safety is less than 50 per cent.

A crushing machine tests gear teeth for 75,000 pounds. Another machine tests springs for 100,000 vibrations.

Engines are tested 20 hours on blocks and 28 hours in the chassis. There are five long-continued tests.

Each car gets a thousand tests and inspections, so errors can't occur.

Costly Extremes

In this car we employ 190 drop forgings. Steel cast-

ings would cost half as much. But drop forgings can't have flaws.

We use 15 roller bearings—Timken and Hyatt. Common ball bearings cost one-fifth as much, but they too often break.

We use a \$75 magneto. We doubly heat our carburetor. And we add \$100,000 per year to our cost to insure positive water circulation.

Parts are ground over and over to insure utter exactness. We don't run nights. And we limit our output to 50 cars daily so men are never hurried.

Then note the big tires—34 x 4. They cost almost twice as much as tires which some men deem sufficient. But the difference comes back, again and again, in the cost of your tire upkeep.

\$2,000,000 for Extremes

We spend in these ways about \$2,000,000 per year more than we need to spend. It is made up largely by factory efficiency — by making all our own parts — by building only one model.

The rest we make up by reducing our profit to the lowest possible minimum.

The result is a car built as we describe — built like the costliest cars on the market — for \$1,095.

The result to you is freedom from trouble, immense endurance and small cost of upkeep. It means a lifetime car.

Men who know now look for such a car. And I pledge them my word that, so long as I build it, they will get it in Reo the Fifth.

This car alone has what experts consider the ideal center control.

All the gear shifting is done by moving a small handle only three inches in each of four directions. It is done with the right hand — done as easily and naturally as moving the spark lever.

No side levers, nothing in the way. Both brakes are operated by foot pedals. And the driver sits on the left hand side as in the finest modern cars.

The bodies are finished with 17 coats. The deep upholstering is of genuine leather, filled with the best curled hair.

Three electric lights, with the dashboard lights set in. You find in this car every final touch as in cars at twice the price.

If another such car sells at such a price, I never yet have found it.

Sold by a thousand dealers.
Write for our 1913 catalog
and we'll direct you to the
nearest one.

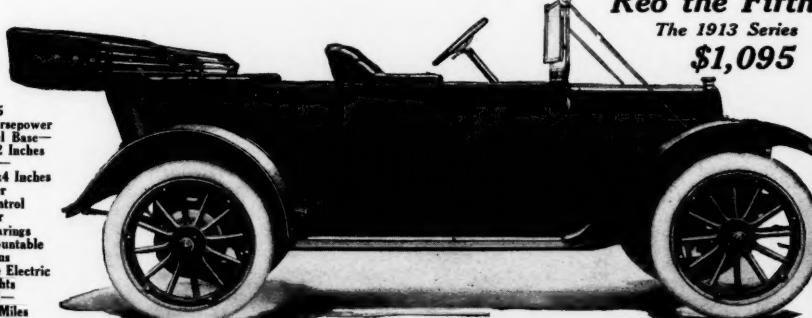
R. M. Owen & Co. General Sales Agents for **Reo Motor Car Co., Lansing, Mich.**

Canadian Factory, St. Catharines, Ont.

30-35
Horsepower
Wheel Base—
112 Inches
Tires—
34x4 Inches
Center
Control
Roller
Bearings
Demountable
Rims
Three Electric
Lights
Speed—
45 Miles
per Hour
Made with
5 and 2
Passenger
Bodies

Top and windshield not included in price. We equip this car with mohair top, side curtains and slip cover, windshield, gas tank for headlights, speedometer, self-starter, extra rim and brackets—all for \$100 extra (list price \$170).

Reo the Fifth
The 1913 Series
\$1,095



A New Big Novel showing an attractive and unusual side of New York life.

The Creeping Tides



KATE JORDAN

starts serially in the April number of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, out on all news stands March 5th. The story is by

KATE JORDAN

Author of "Time the Comedian," "A Circle in the Sand," etc.

It is a love story, a mystery story—at once stirring and charming. It will appear complete in three issues of the magazine.

In the same number are short stories by Helen R. Martin, author of "The Parasite," Anne O'Hagan, Holman F. Day, Edith Summers Updegraff, Elizabeth Newport Hepburn, and others.

There is also, *complete in the same issue*, a novel, "The Sisters," by Grace Margaret Gallaher.

SMITH'S is the biggest illustrated fiction magazine published—and the best. It costs fifteen cents at any news stand. Order your copy now.

\$92.50—Our Price for Next 30 Days

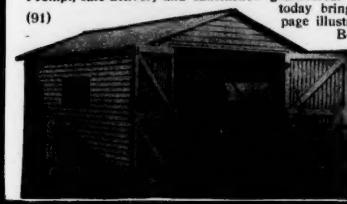
We now offer the Edwards "Steelcote" Garage (1913 Model), direct-from-factory, for \$92.50. But to protect ourselves from advancing prices of steel, we set a time limit upon the offer. We guarantee this record price for 30 days only. Just now we can save you \$35 or more.

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Quickly Set Up Any Place

An artistic, fireproof steel structure for private use. Gives absolute protection from such dire calamities as fire, lightning, accidents, carelessness, etc. Saves \$25 to \$30 monthly in garage rent. Saves time, work, worry and trouble. Comes ready to set up. All parts cut and fitted. Simple, complete directions furnished. Absolutely rust-proof. Joints and seams permanently tight. Practically indestructible. Locks securely. Ample room for largest car and all equipment. Made by one of the largest makers of *portable* fireproof buildings. Prompt, safe delivery and satisfaction guaranteed. Postal sent today brings new 56-page illustrated Garage Book by return mail.

(91)



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Edwards
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Avenue,
Cincinnati,
Ohio



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A million homes with modest incomes have every home-like comfort. They buy these comforts all from us, on open charge account.

They pay, if convenient, a little each month. We have no rigid rules. Nor do we have collectors. All goods are shipped on 30-day trial. Subject to return.

And by selling direct, and buying whole factory outputs, we save them from 30 to 50 per cent. That we guarantee.

New-Style Credit

Our plan is not like others. We ask no contract or charge, no red tape or publicity, no interest, no extra price.

They take your word. Then you pay us by saving 2 or 3 cents a day. Pay as you can. We won't hurry or press you.

Think what comforts you can have at these low prices and these easy terms.

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Furniture
Carpets—Rugs
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Chinaware
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Dollar Book Free

Our mammoth Spring Bargain Book is ready. It pictures 4,782 home things, and many of the pictures are in actual colors. You never saw such an exhibit. It quotes our prices, tells our plan, shows our order blank. We send it free, though each book mailed costs us just \$1.

Write us for it. Let us prove these things to you. Write us now for fear you may forget it. (372)

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JEWELRY
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CUTICURA
 Soap and Ointment

No other emollients do so much to keep the skin clear and healthy, hair live and glossy, scalp clean and hands soft and white. Their use thus tends to prevent pore-clogging, pimples, black-heads, redness, roughness, dandruff and falling hair.

For samples address "Cuticura," Dept. 133, Boston. Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold by druggists and dealers everywhere.

TENDER-FACED MEN

Should shave with Cuticura Soap Shaving Stick. Makes shaving a pleasure instead of a torture. Liberal sample free.



Deformities of the Back

can be greatly benefited or entirely cured by means of the Sheldon Method.

The 16,000 cases we have treated in our experience of over fourteen years are absolute proof of this statement. So no matter how serious your deformity, no matter what treatments you have tried, think of the thousands of sufferers this method has made happy. And, more—we will prove the value of the Sheldon Method in your own case by allowing you to

Use the Sheldon Appliance 30 Days at Our Risk

Since you need not risk the loss of a cent, there is no reason why you should not accept our offer at once. The photographs here show how light, cool, elastic and easily adjustable the Sheldon Appliance is—how different from the old torturous plaster, leather or steel jackets. To weakened or deformed spines it brings almost immediate relief even in the most serious cases. You owe it to yourself to investigate it thoroughly. The price is within reach of all.

Send for our Free Book today and describe the nature and condition of your trouble as fully as possible so we can give you definite information.

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No. 1

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FOR

Eczema and Other Germ Sores

A FRENCH CERATE COMPOUND

1 OUNCE JAR SENT TO ANY ADDRESS
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Brooks' Appliance, the modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that cures rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves, No lies. Durable, cheap. Pat. Sept. 10, '01. Sent on trial

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Rate, 50c. a line, or \$2.61 $\frac{1}{4}$ a line, which includes AINSLEE'S and POPULAR Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next issue of SMITH'S closes Feb. 5th.

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AGENTS MAKE BIG MONEY and become sales managers for our goods. Fast office sellers. Fine profits. Particulars and sample free. One Dip Pen Company, Dept. 9, Baltimore, Md.

WE PAY \$80 A MONTH SALARY and furnish rig and all expenses to introduce our guaranteed poultry and stock powders. Address Bigler Company, X 369, Springfield, Illinois.

CASH IN YOUR SPARE TIME. Good, active men in Big Money part-time, all time, taking orders for our High Grade Tailoring—best selling line on the market—no money or experience necessary—your own clothes at wholesale price—Write at once for Beautiful Outfit Free—The Progress Tailoring Company, Box 1063, Chicago.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

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YOUNG MAN, would you accept and wear a fine tailor-made suit just for showing it to your friends? Or a Slip-on Raincoat Free? Could you use \$5 a day for a little spare time? Perhaps we can offer you a steady job? If you live in a town smaller than 10,000, write at once and get beautiful samples, styles and this wonderful offer. Banner Tailoring Company, Dept. 30, Chicago.

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Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

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SONG POEMS WANTED. Send us your song poems. It includes. They may be original hits, or bring thousands of dollars. Past experience unnecessary. Available work accepted for publication. Instructive booklet and information free. Marks-Goldsmit Co., Dept. 15, Washington, D. C.

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Note This Corn

See What Must be Done—and How

If you pare it, that means to take off the top layer. The root is left to grow. If the blade slips, there may be infection.

Any old-time treatment means just brief relief. Every few days you are compelled to repeat it.

The only cure is complete removal. And the B & B wax—a famous chemist's invention—does that without discomfort.

Apply the little Blue-jay plaster, and the pain stops instantly.

A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
 B protects the corn, stopping the pain at once.
 C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
 D is rubber adhesive to fasten the plaster on.



(237)

Blue-jay Corn Plasters

Sold by Druggists—15c and 25c per package
 Sample Mailed Free. Also Blue-jay Bunion Plasters.

Bauer & Black, Chicago and New York, Makers of Surgical Dressings, etc.



WHITE VALLEY GEMS, IMPORTED from FRANCE

SEE THEM BEFORE PAYING!

These gems are chemical white sapphires—**LOOK like Diamonds.** Stand acid and fire diamond tests. So hard they easily scratch a file and a diamond. **Buy** **100** **genuine** **25** **year** **old** **mounted** **in** **14K** **solid** **gold** **diamond** **mountings.** Will send you any style ring, pin or stud for examination—all charges prepaid—**no money in advance.** Write today for free illustrated booklet, special prices and prices **now** **reduced.** **WHITE VALLEY GEM CO., 708 Sans Blvd., Indianapolis, Ind.**

OUR FACTORY PRICE \$7.50

Your Dealer Asks \$14.00

Where else can you get such a low price as this? Chair shown is solid quarter-sawed Oak—has fine Marokene leather cushion. Height 37 1/2 in.; width 31 in.; depth 21 in. Shipped in four sections—easily assembled in a few minutes.

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Brooks Chair No. 11

Write
Today
Sure

Don't Wear a Truss

TRUSS WEARERS, Here's Great, Good, News.

Tiresome, Tortuous Trusses Can Be Throwed away FOREVER, And It's All Because

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the plain truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to prevent slipping and to afford a firm hold on the skin, yet not so tight as to cause

NO STRAPS, BUCKLES OR SPRINGS—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or compress against the pubic bone.

Thousands have treated themselves in the privacy of the home and conquered the most obstinate cases—no delay from work. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—ineffective when weakened muscles recover there is no further use for truss.

Awarded Gold Medal International Exposition, Rome, Grand Prix at Paris.

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Built like Government Kriegs Boats, of tough, puncture-proof, galvanized steel plates so securely joined together that a leak is impossible. The Mullins Steel Boats are guaranteed against puncture, leaking, waterlogging, warping, drying out, opening seams, etc. MOTORS: The Low-Victor 4-Cycle and Ferro 2-Cycle. Light, powerful, simple, can be operated by the beginner, start like automobile motors, one man control, never stall at any speed, exhaustively underwater. *Send for free illustrated book, free.*

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STEEL ROW BOATS AND CEDAR CANOES

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

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Look like diamonds; wear
like diamonds; flash like diamonds

A REAL Gem Full of
Fire and Brilliance.

The most remarkable scientific discovery of the age; a perfect substitute for genuine diamonds; not an imitation in any sense. Parisian Gems have the scintillating beauty of genuine diamonds; will cut glass and retain their brilliancy like real diamonds.

We do every diamond test! Parisian Gems have no foil or backings; no paste; none but experts can distinguish them from genuine diamonds.

Set out in Genuine Solid Gold 14K. mounting. Write for illustrated price list.

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1 CARAT GEM \$ 5.00
14K SOLID GOLD
RING

1 CARAT GEM \$ 7.50
14K SOLID GOLD
RING

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with BROWNATONE Hair Stain. Absorbs quickly and evenly onto scalp and hair comb. Will not give an unnatural color to your hair. A perfect remedy for gray, faded or bleached hair. \$1.00 at most druggists. Send 25c for trial bottle.

State whether you wish Golden or Medium Brown, Dark Brown or Black.

THE KENTON PHARMACAL CO.,
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YOUR NEWSDEALER

maintains his store at considerable expense. He must pay for help, rent and lighting. He carries many articles that you would never dream of ordering direct from manufacturers, and is, therefore, of great service when you need a newspaper, a cigar, or a box of stationery. Then why not give him all of your custom and so help make his business profitable?

Tell him to show you samples of AINSLEE'S, POPULAR, SMITH'S, PEOPLE'S, NEW STORY and TOP-NOTCH magazines. Select those you want and he will gladly deliver them to your residence regularly.

Then, when you want something good to read, you will not have to search for it.

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Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

You can Weigh
what you Should

Put up the weight of
as many more.

My pupils are among
the most refined, intelli-

You Can Be Well

He in contact is permeated
with your strong spirit, your
wholesome personality — feels
better in body and mind for your
very presence.

You are busy, but you can devote
a few minutes a day in the privacy
of your room, to following scientific,
hygienic principles of health
prescribed to suit your particular

No Drugs —
No Medicines

because results are quick, natural and
permanent, and because they are scientific
and appeal to common sense.

By teaching deep breathing and correct
each vital organ is in its proper place, and by strengthening
the nerves and muscles to these vital organs, I
have built up the strength and vitality by Nature's own
means.

The best physicians are my friends — their wives and
daughters are my pupils.

Be Attractive — well groomed. You can —
improve Your Figure — in other words be at your best.

I want to help you to realize that your health lies almost
entirely in your own hands and that you can reach your
ideal in figure and poise.

Judge what I can do for you by what I have done for
others. I have relieved such Chronic Ailments as:

Indigestion	Constipation	Torpid Liver
Nervousness	Headaches	Anaemia
Rheumatism	Sleeplessness	Catarrh

I have published a free booklet showing how to stand
and walk correctly and giving other information of vital
interest to women. Write for it and I will also tell you about
my work. If you are perfectly well and your figure is just
what you wish, you may be able to help a dear friend — at
least you will help me by your interest in this great move-
ment for greater culture, refinement and beauty in women.
Call and see me when in Chicago. I am almost always at
my desk and glad to see any woman interested in this
great work.

**Sit down and write to me NOW. Don't wait — you may
forget it.**

I have had a wonderful experience and I should like to
tell you about it.

Susanna Cocroft

Dept. 81 624 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago

*Miss Cocroft is a college bred woman. She
is the recognized authority upon the scientific
care of the health and figure of woman.*



Always on Guard

No matter where a ship may be along the American coast; no matter how dark, or cold, or stormy the night, the coast guard is on watch, patrolling the nearest beach or rocky cliffs.

This man, always on guard, could, by his own unsupported efforts, do little to save life, or to guide ships away from perilous points.

As a unit in an efficient system and able, at a moment's notice, to command the service of his nearby station, he becomes a power to whom all ship owners and passengers are indebted.

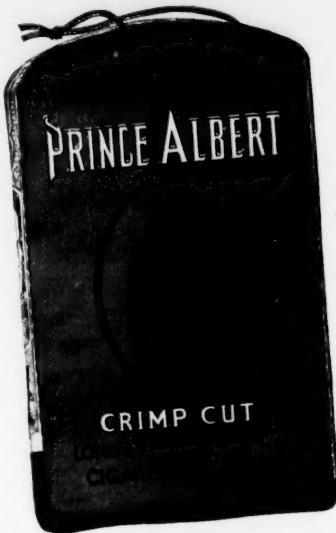
In the same way, the Bell Telephone in your home and office is always on guard.

By itself, it is only an ingenious instrument; but as a vital unit in the Bell System, which links together seven million other telephones in all parts of this country, that single telephone instrument becomes a power to help you at any moment of any hour, day or night.

It costs unwearying effort and millions of dollars to keep the Bell System always on guard, but this is the only kind of service that can adequately take care of the social and commercial needs of all the people of a Nation.

**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

Every Bell Telephone is the Center of the System.



It's all real and true Prince Albert, no matter what size package you prefer. Just buy the one that hits you favorable-like—then you're in for the big smoke!

That 5c toppy red bag (weather-proofed inside and out) is built for folks who want a small package to tuck away in their jeans—just as others demand the tidy red tin because it slips into coat pockets and hip pockets.

You cut loose with a jimmy pipe jammed brimful of P. A. or roll up a P. A. cigarette and get some fun out of life. You never did get a real smoke before. P. A. can't bite your tongue, because the bite's cut out. Every particle of P. A. means just so much joy smoke—to you, to every man who's pipe hungry!

Get this: Prince Albert rolled into a cigarette has 'em all backed off the boards. It's a revelation!



Says Hunch:

"After all, it's the tobacco, not the package, that puts Prince Albert in the spot-light. Get yours while the getting is good."

Buy Prince Albert everywhere. In the toppy 5c red bag, tidy 10c red tin and handsome pound and half-pound humidores.

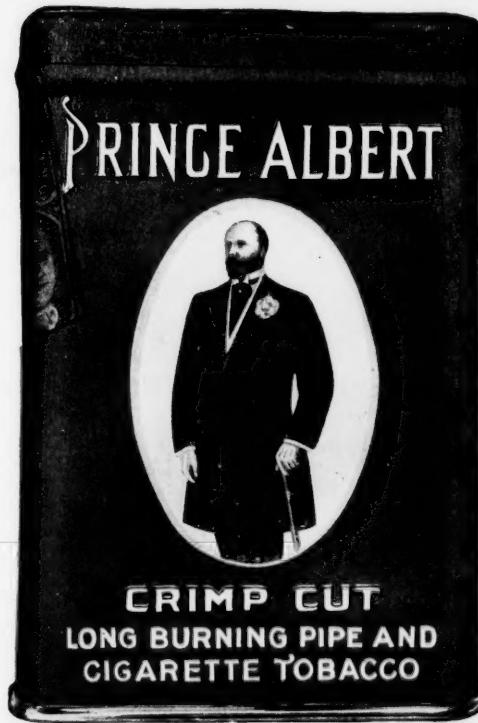
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TOBACCO CO.
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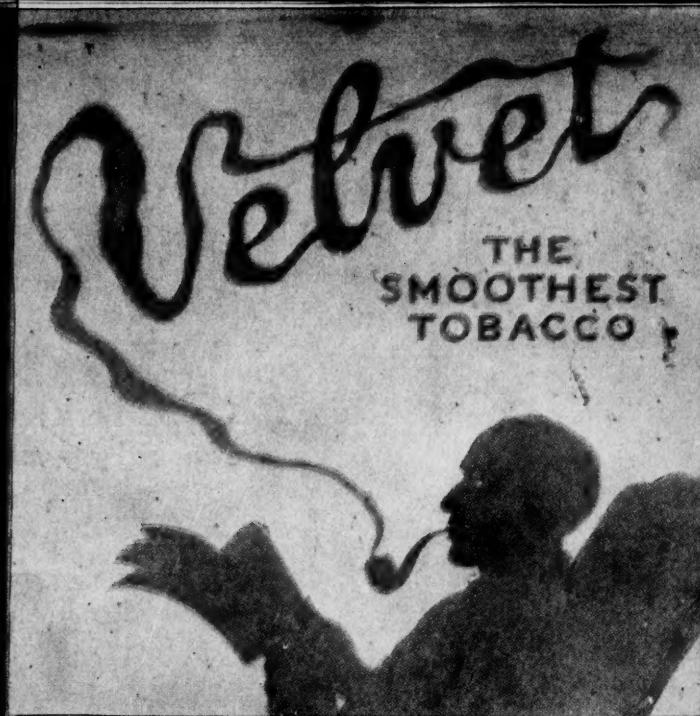
You can buy

PRINCE ALBERT

the national joy smoke

*in the toppy 5c
weather-proof bag*





Why Smith Stays Home

A pipe friend said - "Smoke Velvet, it's great!" That's how it started - now it's a regular thing - Comfort and contentment - wife likes the fragrance too. Try it in your home!

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

10¢ TINS
Handy 5¢ Bags - or one
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